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The Story of
Amédée's
Youth



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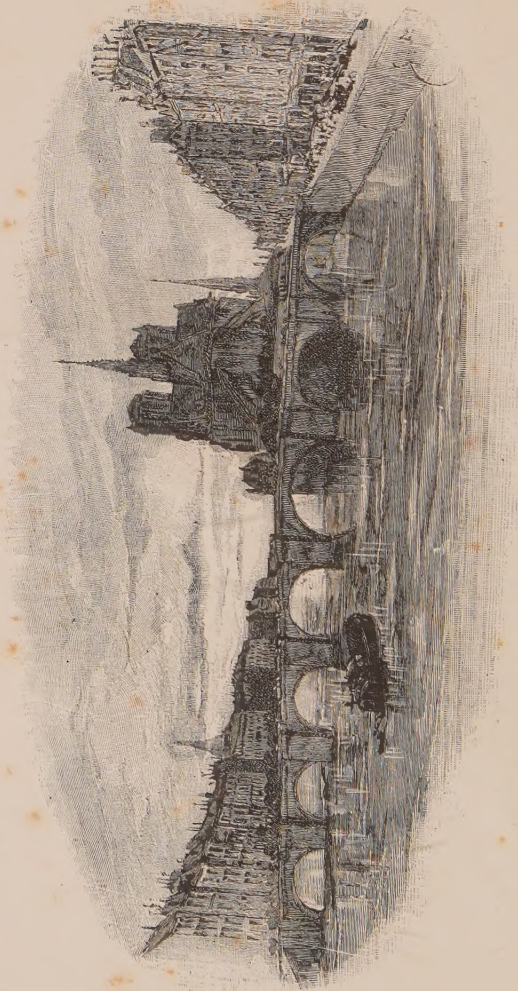
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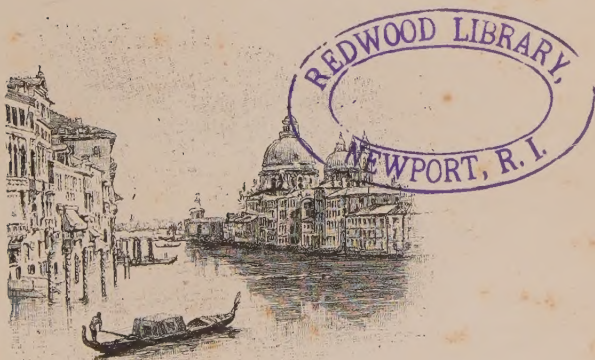
OR

THE STORY OF AMÉDÉE'S YOUTH

TRANSLATED BY E. P. ROBINS

AND

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILÉ BAYARD



GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LIMITED

9 LAFAYETTE PLACE, NEW YORK
LONDON, GLASGOW AND MANCHESTER

1890

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TO LOUIS DÉPRET.

For a long time, my dear Dépret, I have been wishing to dedicate one of my books to you, in the first place as to the graceful writer, the moralist to whom we are indebted for such sagacity and penetration of observation in his works upon the human soul, and then, as to one of the friends whom I love most dearly and by whom I am most dearly loved. Now I have just finished "Toute une Jeunesse." Will you have this novel? No more than in the case of "David Copperfield," Dickens' delightful masterpiece,—si parva licet . . . —, are these pages an autobiography, a confession, only I admit that Amédée Violette, an imaginary character upon an imaginary scene, looks upon life as I looked upon it when I was a child and when I was a young man. Such as it is, the book is sincere. I trust that it may please you, my dear Dépret, with its tenderness and its irony.

Sincerely yours,

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE.



I

LOOKING into the depths—quite to the bottom, in fact—of his early recollections, Amédée Violette beheld himself, a little fellow with his hair in “Enfant d’Edouard” style, playing on a fifth story balcony where the woodbine was in bloom. As the child was very small, the balcony appeared to him of immense dimensions. Amédée had received a present, either on his fête-day or his birthday, of a box of water-colors, and stretched at length on an old piece of carpet, all his mind on his work, now and then wetting his brush in his mouth, he was coloring the wood engravings in an odd volume of the *Magasin Pittoresque*. In his neighbor’s rooms, which adjoined those of his parents and the occupants of which were entitled to the use of half the

balcony, some one was playing on the piano one of Marcailhou's waltzes that was very much à la mode at that time, entitled *Indiana*. Any man, born about 1845, who does not feel his eyes moistened by homesick tears as he turns the leaves of an old volume of the *Magasin Pittoresque* or hears Marcailhou's *Indiana* played on a superannuated piano has but a very limited stock of sensibility.

When the child was tired of painting the faces and hands of all the persons in the prints "flesh color," he arose and went to look through the iron bars of the railing ; he could see the rue Nôtre-Dame-des-Champs stretching from right to left in a graceful curve, one of the quietest streets in the Luxembourg quarter, scarcely half built up in those days, where the branches of the trees overhung the board fences of the gardens, and so silent, so peaceful that the solitary wayfarer could hear the birds singing in their cages.

This was of a September afternoon, under a deep, pure sky, where great clouds, like silvery mountains, were sailing with a slow majesty of movement.

He suddenly heard himself summoned by a sweet voice.

"Amédée, your father will be home soon. You must wash your hands before dinner, my darling."

And his mother came out upon the balcony to look for him.

His mother ! How short a time he had known her ! It cost him an effort to summon up her image from the uncertain mists of his recollections ; pretty

and unassuming, so pale, with beautiful blue eyes, her head always inclined slightly to one side, as if her splendid chestnut hair was too heavy for her, and smiling the weary, mournful smile of those who have not long to live.

She made his toilet and kissed him on the forehead after she had combed his hair ; then she spread the modest table, adorned, as it always was, with a few flowers in a pretty vase.

Then the father came in. Oh ! he was not a person to put on airs, not he ; a timid man, rather, one who hugged the walls as he passed along the streets. He made an effort to be cheerful, however, as he entered his rooms, and before he kissed his little boy, raised him at arm's length high above his head, with a "hoop-là !"

Presently, however, when he had kissed his young wife upon the eyes and as he was holding her to his side so tenderly, so lovingly, his cheerful expression was changed to one of anxiety as he asked her :

"Have you coughed much to-day ?"

She replied as she always did : "No, not much," but casting down her eyes as she did so, as children do when they tell a fib.

Then the father put on his old coat—the one that he had taken off was not very new—; Amédée was hoisted into his chair in front of his silver cup ; the young mother returned from the kitchen bringing in the soup-tureen, and after he had unfolded his napkin, the father, with a quick motion

of his hand, brushed back behind his ear the long lock of hair that was continually falling into his eyes on the right-hand side.

"There is not too much air this evening? . . . You are not afraid to go out on the balcony? . . . Put on a shawl, then, Lucie," said M. Violette, as



his wife was pouring what water remained in the carafe into the green box where the nasturtiums were growing.

"Why, no, Paul, there is not too much air, I assure you. Take Amédée down from his chair, please, and come out."



“HOOP-LA!”

It was cool out there on the elevated terrace. The sun had set ; the great clouds were now like golden mountains, and an agreeable odor of greenery ascended from the neighboring gardens.

Suddenly a voice was heard that had a hearty ring : " Good-evening, Monsieur Violette ; is not this a fine evening ? "

It was their neighbor, M. Gérard, an engraver, who had also come out upon his end of the balcony to breathe the fresh air after having spent the whole day bent over his plate. A big, jolly-looking man was this M. Gerard, bald, with a red beard on his chin where there were some white hairs, in a ragged blouse ; he immediately proceeded to light his clay pipe, the bowl of which represented the face of Abdel-Kader, deeply colored all except the turban and the eyes, which were of white enamel.

The engraver's wife, a rotund little woman with laughing eyes, soon came out to join her husband. She came, pushing before her her two little girls ; the smaller of them was two years younger than Amédée ; the other—ten years old and already wearing the aspect of a sensible little body—was the pianist who had to drum out Marcailhou's *Indiana* an hour every day.



The children prattled through the trellised grating that divided the balcony in two parts. Louise, the elder of the two little girls, who knew how to read, was telling the two little ones interesting stories: Joseph sold by his brethren, Robinson Crusoe discovering the print of footsteps in the sand, etc.

Amédée, who has gray hairs now, still remembers the shudder that ran down his spine when the wolf, concealed by the bed-spread and by Grandma's night-cap, gnashed his teeth and said to little Red Riding-hood: "It's the better to eat you, my dear!"

Just think! It was almost dark then on the terrace. It was terrible!

In the meantime the two families, their elbows conjugally supported on the railings of their respective balconies, were also having their little chat. The Violettes, who were quiet folks, mostly contented themselves with listening to their neighbors, with such brief answers as politeness required. . . . "Oh! indeed! . . . Is it possible? . . . You are quite right" . . . but the Gérards liked to talk. Mme. Gérard, a good housewife, would broach some question of domestic economy, would tell, for instance, how she had been out during the day and had seen in a shop of the rue du Bac, *à la Fileuse*, a certain piece of merino: "Something very cheap, I assure you, Madame . . . and full width!" Or perhaps it was the engraver, an artless politician of the fashion of '48, declaring that

the republic must be accepted : " Oh ! not the red, you know, but the true, the good one ;" or wishing that Cavaignac might be elected at the December elections, although the artist was then hard at work engraving — for one must live, after all — a portrait of Prince Louis Napoleon that was to figure in the electoral campaign. M. and Mme. Violette let him run on ; perhaps they were not very attentive to the conversation at all times ; and when it was quite dark, they gently clasped each other's hands and watched the stars.

Those fine evenings at the beginning of autumn up there on the cool balcony were the earliest of Amédée's recollections. Then there came a break in his memory, as in a book whence some of the leaves have been torn out, and then his remembrance carried him back to sombre days.

Winter had come ; there was no more going out upon the balcony, and through the tightly closed windows all that was to be seen was the sky of a sullen gray. Amédée's mother was ill and had to keep her bed. When he was seated before his little table near the bed, occupied in cutting out with a pair of scissors whole regiments of hussars from a page of Epinal, she almost frightened him, did his mamma, as she lay there with her elbows supported on the pillow ; his poor mamma, who watched him so long and so sadly, her thin hands buried in her beautiful hair that fell around her in disorder, and two little red spots showing under the emaciation of her cheek-bones.



ON THE BALCONY.

She no longer came to take him from his bed in the morning now, but in her stead an old woman in a short jacket, who never kissed him and who smelled horribly of snuff.

His father, too, seemed to pay him no attention when he came home at evening from his office, always bringing with him phials and little packages from the druggist's. Sometimes he was accompanied by the physician, a large gentleman, very scrupulous in his attire, very redolent of perfumery, and very much out of breath after climbing the five flights of stairs. On one occasion, Amédée had seen this stranger take his mother in his arms as she was seated on the bed and hold his ear for a long time against the invalid's back, and the child had asked : "What does he do that for, mamma?"

M. Violette, more nervous than ever, continually brushing his rebellious lock back behind his ear, would accompany the doctor to the door and linger there in conversation with him. Then Amédée, summoned by his mother, would climb upon the bed, and she would devour him with her glittering eyes, would clasp him passionately to her sunken bosom, and say to him in mournful tones : "My little Médée ! My poor little Médée !" as if she was sorry for him. Why ? What was the reason of it ?

Then the father came in with a forced smile on his face that it made one's heart ache to look upon.

"Well, what does the doctor say?"

"Nothing, nothing. . . . You are getting along

much better. . . . Only we shall have to apply another small blister to-night, my poor Lucie."

How long, how monotonous are little Médée's days at the bedside of his slumbering mother, in the close bedroom that smells like a drug-store, where only the old snuff-taker comes in from time to time to bring a cup of broth or put some charcoal in the fireplace !

Sometimes, however, their neighbor, Mme. Gérard, comes to make inquiries.

"Always very weak, my dear Mme. Gérard. . . . Ah ! I am beginning to feel discouraged."

But Mme. Gérard, the rotund little lady with the laughing eyes, will not allow her to give way like that.

"Don't you see, Mme. Violette, it is this confounded winter, which seems as if it would never end. March will soon be here now, however, and they are already selling primroses from the little carts along the curbstones. . . . You will certainly do better with the bright sunlight. . . . If you wish I will take Amédée to play with my little girls ; it will give the poor child a little distraction."

And now the kind-hearted neighbor takes little Amédée every day and keeps him all the afternoon, and he enjoys himself very much in the Gérards' quarters.

Four small rooms, no more, but with a great deal of queer old furniture, and engravings, and mouldings, and sketches painted by the engraver's com-

rades all over the walls ; and the doors are always open, and the children can play wherever they choose, chase each other through the apartment, turn it upside down. In the drawing-room, that has been transformed into a work-room, the artist is seated on a high stool, his engraving needle in his hand, and the light from the uncurtained window, sifting through the ground glass, is reflected from the good fellow's cranium as he bends over his sheet of brass. He plods along all day—there are the household expenses and two girls to educate, don't you see?—and notwithstanding his advanced opinions, is still occupied with engraving his Prince Louis, “a trickster who is going to juggle us out of our republic.” He barely quits work two or three times a day to smoke his Abd-el-Kader. Nothing diverts him from his task, not even the little ones, who, tired of performing their four-handed piece on the decrepit piano, have joined with Amédée in getting up a game of hide-and-seek behind the old sofa in Empire style, with ornaments of lions' heads in bronze, right behind their father's back. But Mother Gérard, from the penetralia of her kitchen, where she is always busy getting up something good for dinner, is of opinion that they are really making too much racket. Maria, in fact, the younger of the two, a regular little madcap, in trying to catch her elder sister has just pushed a great arm-chair against the renaissance side-board with a violence that made all the Rouen china shake again.

"Come, come, children," Mme. Gérard exclaims, without anger, from the recesses of her cavern, from whence proceeds a delicious smell of frying bacon ; "let your father have a little peace and go and play in the dining-room."

They obey, for there they can move the chairs about as they wish, make houses of them and play at visiting. That madcap Maria—did ever one hear of such a thing? and she only five years old!—has taken Amédée's arm, whom she calls little husband ; she pays a visit to her sister Louise and introduces her baby to her, a papier-maché doll with a big head, bundled up in a napkin.

"As you see then, madame, it is a boy."

"And what do you intend to make of him when he is grown up?" inquires Louise, who takes part in the game out of good-nature, for she is ten years old, if you please, and a little lady.

"Why, madame," Maria replies with all seriousness, "he is to be a soldier."

The engraver, who has left his bench to stretch his legs a little and light his third Abd-el-Kader, is standing at the moment in the door-way of his atelier, and Mme. Gérard, her mind at ease regarding the ragout that is cooking over a slow fire—oh! how good it smells in the kitchen!—has just entered the dining-room. They both look at the children, so droll, so charming with their small airs. Then the man looks at his wife, the woman looks at her husband, and the two of them break out into a joyous fit of laughter.

But there is no laughing in the adjoining apartment ; laughter is never heard now in the abode of the Violettes. It is cough, cough, cough ! Almost to strangling, almost to the rattle in the throat ! She is going away, the timorous young woman, whose hair is too heavy for her, and when the fine evenings come again, she will not linger on the balcony holding her husband's hand in the darkness and watching the stars. Little Amédée cannot understand it, but he is seized with an undefined terror. He feels that something frightful is happening in his home. Every one causes him fear, now. He is afraid of the old woman who smells of tobacco and who looks at him pityingly as she dresses him in the morning ; afraid of the doctor in his fine clothes, who climbs the five flights twice a day now, and leaves a trail of perfumery behind him in the air of the apartment ; of his father, who does not go to his office any more, wears a beard of three days' growth, and walks to and fro in the little drawing-room with feverish tread, throwing his lock of hair back into position behind his ear with a maniacal gesture. Alas ! alas ! he is afraid of his mother, his mother whom he has beheld this very evening by the light of the night-lamp as she lay there with her head buried in the pillow, her nose so pinched, her face upturned, and who did not seem to know him, though her eyes were wide open, when the father took his boy in his arms and held him over her so that he might kiss that forehead where the cold sweat lay.

It has come, at last, the terrible day, that Amédée will never forget, though he was then but a little, a very little child.

What awoke him on that day was his father's embrace, who had come to take him from his bed, his father, whose eyes are those of a madman, eyes that are red with weeping. Great tears are swelling, too, beneath the lids of the neighbor, M. Gérard—what brings him there so early? He stands close at M. Violette's side as if to protect him, and pats him affectionately upon the back with his opened hand.

"Come, my poor friend! . . . Courage! . . . Courage!"

But the poor friend's courage is all gone. He suffers M. Gérard to take his child from him, and his head sinks upon the shoulder of the good engraver like the head of a dead man, and he begins to weep again, to weep with great sobs that cause all his frame to tremble.

"Mamma! . . . I want to see mamma!" . . . cries little Amédée in affright.

Alas! he will never see her more! In the Gérard's rooms, where they carry him and where the kind woman dresses him, they tell him that his mamma has gone away, that she will be away for a long, long time; that he must love his papa a great deal, must think only of his papa, and other things that he does not understand, that he dares not ask the explanation of, and that fill his soul with terror.

How strange it all is! The engraver and his

wife seem to give their attention to nobody but him, keep looking at him all the time. The little girls, too, they treat him in a very unusual manner, almost respectfully. What has caused this change? Louise does not open her piano, and when little Maria wants to take her "menagery" from the closet in the side-board, Mme. Gérard tries to keep her tears back and tells her in a gruff voice, "There is to be no playing to-day."

After breakfast Mme. Gérard puts on her hat and shawl and goes out, taking Amédée with her. They take a cab, which makes its way through streets unknown to the child, crosses a bridge in the centre of which stands a great bronze horseman, bare-headed and wearing a laurel crown, and stops before a great shop, which they enter in the midst of the throng, and where a very polite and very active young man fits Amédée with a suit of black.

Upon their return, the child finds his father and M. Gérard seated at the table in the dining-room, both occupied in addressing great envelopes bordered with black. M. Violette was not weeping then, but grief had implanted great furrows on his face, and he made no attempt to keep his lock of hair from falling over his eyes. At the sight of his son in his suit of black, he groans, rises from his chair, reeling like a drunken man, and again bursts into tears.

No, little Amédée will never forget that day, nor the horrible day that succeeded it, when Mme. Gé-

rard came early in the morning to dress him in his black clothes, while he could hear a sound of hammering and of coarse shoes dragging over the floor



in the adjoining chamber. He suddenly remembered that he has not seen his mother since the day before yesterday.

“Mamma! . . . I want to see mamma!”

Then it becomes necessary to endeavor to make him understand the truth. Mme. Gérard again tells him that he must be very good, very obedient, so as to be a comfort to his father, who is suffering from a great grief, and she adds that his mamma has gone away forever, and that she is in heaven.

In heaven ! It is very high and very far away, is heaven.

But if his mother is in heaven, what is it that those porters in black are carrying out in that heavy box, that they knock against the wall at every turn of the staircase ? What is it that is being borne away in that dismal carriage which he follows through the rain, lengthening his childish stride as he walks at his father's side, his little hand clasped in his father's black-gloved hand ? What is it that they are placing in that hole from whence comes an odor of fresh-turned earth, in that hole that is surrounded with people dressed in black and that makes his father turn away his head in horror ? What is it that they are hiding in the yawning pit, in this garden filled with crosses and urns of stone, where the trees in their brown buds of early March, glittering in the sunlight after the shower, let fall from their branches big drops of water that are like tears ?

His mother is in heaven ! . . . Amédée does not dare to ask to "see mamma" on the evening of that frightful day, as he sits beside his father at that table where the old woman in the short jacket for a long time now has been placing only two

plates. The poor widower, who has just dried his eyes again with his napkin, has placed a little meat upon a plate for Amédée, and proceeds to cut it in small pieces ; and as he sits there, very pale in his high chair, the child wonders if he will some day meet his mother's look, that look that was so caressing and so gentle, in one of those stars that she loved to watch, upon the balcony, in the cool September evenings, holding her husband's hand meanwhile in the darkness.

II

TREES are like men ; some of them seem to have no luck. A tree that really *was* unfortunate, however, was the poor devil of a plane-tree that was planted in the courtyard of the boys' school that was situated in the rue de la Grande-Chaumière and was under the direction of M. Batifol.

Chance might just as well have made this plane-tree grow on the border of some stream, on a pleasant bank from whence it could have watched the boats sailing up and down, or even on the rampart of some garrison town, where it might at least have had the distraction of listening to the music of the military band twice a week. But no ! It was written in the book of fate that this unhappy tree was to lose its bark every summer, as a snake sheds its skin, and strew the ground with its dead leaves at the advent of the first frost in the courtyard of the Batifol school, which was a place of few delights.

In the first place, this solitary tree—oh heavens ! it was a plane-tree just like any other (*platanus orientalis*), there was nothing original about it—must have been painfully conscious that it was an accessory in inflicting a deception upon the public. It was a fact that upon the sign of the Batifol Institute



(Course of the Lycée Henri IV. Pupils prepared for college and the State schools) these deceptive words were to be read : "*There is a garden,*" when, in fact, there was only a common, every-day courtyard, sanded with sand from the river, with a paved gutter surrounding it ; a courtyard from which the

only agricultural products that were ever harvested—and even they only after the noon-day period of recreation—were a half dozen marbles lost by the boys, a broken top, and a certain number of shoe-pegs. It was the plane-tree alone that afforded any justification to the illusion, the fiction of a garden promised by the sign. Now, as trees are certainly possessed of common sense, this one must have been quite well aware that *it* did not constitute a garden, all by itself.

Then again, it was really an unjust fate which condemned an inoffensive tree that had never harmed a soul to grow there by a school-room door in a perfectly correct rectangle, formed on one side by a prison wall that had its top thickly strewn with broken bottles and on the other three by three structures of a distressing symmetry, above the numerous entrances of which were displayed inscriptions the mere reading of which sufficed to bring on a fit of yawning: Room No. 1. Room No. 2. Room No. 3. Room No. 4. Staircase A. Staircase B. Entrance to dormitories. Refectory. Laboratory.

The poor plane-tree was broken-hearted in this dismal spot. Its enjoyment of the only pleasant moments that it had—the period of recreation, when the courtyard was enlivened by the shouts and laughter of the urchins—was embittered by the sight of three or four scholars undergoing punishment by standing motionless at the foot of its trunk. The birds of Paris which yet are not very fastidious,

hardly ever perched among its branches and had never built a nest there. It is even to be supposed that this disillusioned tree, when the April wind shook its leaves and the small truants of the sky came to play their pranks in its shade, was charitable enough to whisper to them : "Take my word for it, this is no fitting place for you. Go and make love somewhere else !"

The greater part of Amédée's childhood was to be overshadowed by this plane-tree that had been planted there under an evil star.

M. Violette, a clerk in a public office, was condemned to seven hours of daily imprisonment, one or two of which were discontentedly devoted by him to filling up printed blanks that probably were of no earthly use whatever, and the remainder to different occupations that were as varied as they were intellectual, to wit, yawning, biting his nails, talking scandal about his superiors, grumbling over the slowness of promotion, cooking an apple or a sausage for his breakfast in the oven of the stove, and reading the morning paper through to the very end, even to the signature of the director, not omitting the advertisements, among which a country clergyman expresses his artless gratitude that he has finally been cured of an obstinate attack of constipation. In remuneration of this daily captivity, M. Violette received at the end of every month a sum that was just sufficient to supply his family with soup and beef, with not too many pickles about it.

M. Violette's father, a watchmaker at Chartres, had drained his till and died without leaving any savings, so as to raise his son to this distinguished position. The Silvio Pellico of the public office, at times when he was particularly exasperated by his *ennui*, would regret that he had not followed in the footsteps of the author of his being, and would behold himself in imagination seated in the bright little shop near the cathedral, a magnifying-glass at his eye, about to examine some old turnip that a farmer had brought in for repair, while above his bench hung twenty-five or thirty gold or silver watches that the tillers of the soil had brought in to be doctored up the week previous, and which they were now about to come and reclaim, taking advantage of its being market-day.

But tell me, if you will, would such a lowly calling have been worthy of a young man who had completed his studies and received his degree of bachelor of arts, who was literally stuffed with Greek roots and *conciones*, who could rattle off for you in a breath the proofs of the existence of God, and whom you would not find tripping if you asked him for the dates of the reigns of Nabonassar and Nabopolassar? No, gentlemen; and this little watchmaker of Chartres, this plain every-day mechanic, had a better understanding of the intellectual movement of the present day. (Cries of "Very good. Very good. Hear.") Are we still in Egypt, in the days of the Pharaohs, that a son must compulsorily succeed to his father's business? (Expres-

sions of approval.) No, this modest shop-keeper acted, gentlemen, in accordance with the principles of democracy, he followed the instinct of a noble and wise ambition (applause from many of the benches), and he made of his son, a sensible and intelligent young man, a machine for filling up printed forms, and the young man wasted so many days in guessing the riddles of the *Illustration* that



he could read them off with as much facility as M. Ledrain deciphers the cuneiform inscription on an Assyrian tile. And thus it happened—an admirable result which must have afforded delight to the shade of the old watchmaker!—that his son had developed into a *monsieur*, a public functionary, so well recompensed by the state that he was obliged to have the seat of his trousers patched

with bits of cloth as nearly alike as possible to the original fabric, and that his poor young wife, while she was alive, always had to carry the silver ladle and the six silver forks to the pawnbroker's whenever rent-day came around.

Be that as it may, however, M. Violette being now a widower and having something to occupy his time all day long, found it difficult to decide what to do as to the disposal of his little boy. No doubt his neighbors, the Gérards, were very kind to the little fellow, and would gladly continue to give him their care during the afternoons, but this condition of affairs could not last forever and M. Violette had compunctions about abusing the good-nature of these kind folks.

Little Amédée caused them no trouble, however, and Mother Gérard had already begun to love him as she did her own children. The orphan had become the inseparable playmate of little Maria, an out-and-out small demon, who was growing prettier and prettier day by day. The engraver having discovered in a closet an old bear-skin hat of the grenadiers of the National Guard, the wearing of which was discontinued in '48, ceded it to the two children. It must be admitted that it made a splendid plaything and that there could be nothing better adapted to excite their imagination. It was at once mentally transmuted by them into a bear of enormous size and frightful ferocity that they applied themselves to hunting through the rooms of the apartment, watching it from ambush behind

chairs, aiming at it with canes and puffing out their little cheeks to give a "Poum!" with all the force of their lungs in imitation of the firing of a gun. This sylvan diversion completed the ruin of the old head-piece. In the meantime, tall Louise's scales were running on with the noise of a musical torrent, the frying-pan was twittering in the kitchen over mother Gérard's range, and, unruffled in the midst of all this joyous disturbance and riot where one could scarcely hear himself think, the engraver, wrapped up in his work, was putting his fine touches to the cordon of the Legion of Honor and the great bullion epaulettes of the Prince President, whom he yet detested with all his heart, jealous republican as he was and having a premonition of the *coup d'état*.

"Truly, Monsieur Violette," said Mother Gérard to the clerk, when, upon his return from his office he came to take away his son and make his excuses for the trouble that the child caused his neighbors, "I assure you truly that he does not give us the slightest trouble. . . . Wait a little before you send him away to school. . . . He is a very quiet boy, and if Maria did not egg him on to play (I give you my word that of the two of them it is Maria that is the boy!) your Amédée would be always looking at his picture-books. My big Louise makes him read two pages of the '*Morale en Actions*' every day, and only yesterday Gérard was almost tickled to death by the way in which he recited the story of the Grateful Elephant. . . . He can go to school later on. . . . Wait a little while."

But M. Violette has decided to send Amédée to M. Batifol's school, as a day-scholar, of course. It is so convenient, only a couple of steps away. There will be nothing to prevent Amédée from coming often to see his young friends. But he is going on seven, he is very backward, he can scarcely make his letters. Children are never too young to "commence," etc., etc. And that is why, one fine spring day, M. Violette and his little boy make their appearance in M. Batifol's study, who will be there in a moment, so the servant tells them.

It is a hideously ugly room, this study of M. Batifol's. In the three bookcases that are never opened by the master of the premises, a regular vulgar pedant who feeds his boarding scholars on thin soup, some of those works that are bought on the *quais* at so much a yard, such as Laharpe's *Cours de Littérature* and a Rollin's history that seems to have no end, allow an atmosphere of tiresomeness to percolate through their bindings. The cylinder desk, one of those masterpieces of mahogany of which the faubourg Saint Antoine still preserves the secret, is surmounted by a terrestrial globe.

Through an open window, little Amédée immediately takes notice of the plane-tree struggling with its stupefaction in the middle of the court, notwithstanding the blue sky, the sunshine, and the soft vernal breeze.

A young blackbird, unacquainted with the quarter as yet, had come a short while before to perch

among its branches, but the tree doubtless said to him :

“What are you after here ? The Luxembourg is within a short flight from here. It is delightful in the Luxembourg. There are children making mud-pies, nurses talking with soldiers on the benches,



lovers walking about hand-in-hand. Why don't you go there, then, you little fool ?”

And so the blackbird flew away, and the pedagogue's tree, restored to its normal condition of solitariness, lets its disillusioned leaves droop for shame.

Amédée, in the confused intelligence of childhood, is about to make inquiry of himself why that plane-tree looks so surly, when a door opens and M. Batifol appears.

Of forbidding aspect, in spite of his ridiculous name, the schoolmaster resembles a hippopotamus dressed up in a great frock-coat of black broad-cloth. He comes forward heavily, bows with dignity to M. Violette, seats himself in his leather-covered arm-chair in front of his bundles of papers, and taking off his skull-cap displays to view a head of such baldness, a baldness so immense, so round, and so yellow that little Amédée compares it in terror to the terrestrial globe that stands on top of the desk.

It is all the same thing. Those two globes are twins. On M. Batifol's cranium there is even an eruption of pimples in groups that are very like the archipelagos of the Pacific Ocean.

"To what do I owe the honor . . . ?" the teacher asks in a thick voice, a voice that would answer admirably to call out the names of the honor men in an award of prizes.

M. Violette is not a bold man. It is very stupid, but when his chief of bureau calls him into his private office to discuss some matter of business, his tongue at once grows thick and his legs weaken under him, and a person of M. Batifol's imposing appearance is not calculated to inspire him with confidence. Amédée has his father's timidity, and while the child, terrified at the resemblance between

the globe and M. Batifol's baldness, is beginning to tremble, M. Violette loses his wits, twists his rebellious lock, hunts for his words, and succeeds in saying nothing with any meaning. He winds up, however, by repeating nearly the same things that he said to Mme. Gérard: "His son is going on seven, he is very backward," etc., etc.

The teacher seems to listen to M. Violette with kindly interest, giving an occasional nod of his geographical head, but in reality he is observing and "sizing up" his visitors. The father's scanty frock-coat, the little chap's pallid complexion, all that has an odor of poverty; it is a question of a day scholar at forty francs a month, nothing more. M. Batifol accordingly cuts short the speech with which he is accustomed to favor his new patrons on such occasions as this.

He will take charge of his "young friend" (forty francs a month, it is understood, and the child to bring his breakfast with him in a little basket), of his young friend, who will at first take his place in one of the elementary classes. (Some fathers prefer, and they are right in doing so, to give their sons half board, with an abundant and healthy meal at noon-time, but M. Batifol does not make that a necessary condition.) His young friend, then, will first be placed in an infant class, but when there he will begin at once, *ab ovo*, to prepare himself to receive at some future day the instruction of that University of France, *alma parens* (the study of foreign languages, of course, is not included in the

ordinary terms of payment), of that illustrious university, which by the emulation between its students and their common labors (it is unnecessary to mention that accomplishments, such as dancing, music, fencing, etc., are also extras), fits children for social life and makes of them men and citizens.

M. Violette is satisfied, as he is compelled to be, to send his son as a day scholar at forty francs.

The bargain is concluded. To-morrow Amédée will make his entrance into the "ninth preparatory."

"Give me your hand, my little friend," says the schoolmaster when the father and son rise to take leave.

Amédée, in great perturbation, extends his hand, and M. Batifol encloses it in his own enormous paw, which is so big, so heavy, and so cold that the child shivers at the contact and thinks that he is touching a leg of mutton weighing seven or eight pounds, fresh from the butcher's shop.

At length they take their departure. Early next morning, however, Amédée, carrying a little basket in which the old woman who smells of snuff has placed a bottle of wine and water, a little cold veal, and a couple of tarts, presents himself at the Batifol school, there to be prepared without delay to receive the lessons of *Alma Parens*.

The hippopotamus in black frock-coat at once conducts his new pupil to the class-room of the "ninth preparatory" and introduces him to the master, without, however, taking off his cap this time—to the child's regret, who would like to be

quite certain whether M. Batifol's skull is checkered by degrees of latitude and longitude like the terrestrial globe.

"Here is a new day scholar, M. Tavernier. You will see how he stands in reading and writing, will you not?"

M. Tavernier, a long, yellow-faced young man—another bachelor he was, who, if he was to-day a corporal of gens d'armes like his late father in some pleasant leafy spot among the apple-trees of Normandy, would not, perhaps, have that papier-maché appearance and would not be wearing at eight o'clock in the morning a black coat such as those that are seen hanging in the morgue—M. Tavernier receives the "new boy" with a faint smile, which disappears as soon as M. Batifol has withdrawn.

"Go and sit down there in that empty place . . . there . . . on the third bench," M. Tavernier says in a tone of indifference. He condescends so far, however, as to conduct Amédée to the place that he is to occupy. But little Violette's neighbor, one of the future citizens who are preparing themselves for the responsibilities of social life—and it may be remarked that some of them have the seats of their trousers in a dilapidated condition—has been guilty of bringing into the class-room a handful of cock-chafers. He is condemned to stand sentry for a quarter of an hour, which duty he will perform at the foot of the crabbed old plane-tree in the court.

"You will see what a cur he is," the disgraced

scholar whispers in Amédée's ear as soon as the young man has mounted to his desk again. But M. Tavernier strikes with his ruler on the cover of his desk, and having restored silence, calls upon Master Godard to recite his lesson.

Master Godard, a great fat-cheeked boy with half-closed eyes, rises automatically from his seat. Without stopping to take breath, with a sudden outburst like a faucet that is opened wide, he commences the recital of *The Wolf and the Lamb*, and La Fontaine's fable rolls from his tongue with mad rapidity, like thread from a bobbin driven by steam.

"The-right-of-the-stronger-is-always-the-best-as-we-are - about-to-prove-a - lamb-was-quenching - his thirst-in-the-clear-water of-a-running-stream. . . ."

Suddenly Master Godard becomes confused ; he hesitates. The machine has not been well oiled. There is an obstruction in the faucet.

"In-the-clear-water-of-a-running-stream. . . .
In-the-clear-water-of-a-running-stream. . . ."

Then he stops with a jerk. The faucet is shut off. Master Godard does not know his lesson, and he also will have to stand under the plane-tree and do guard duty.

After Master Godard comes Master Grosdidier, then Master Blanc, then Master Moreau (Gaston), then Master Moreau (Ernest), then Master Malapert, then another, and another, and yet another, who all pour forth with the same volubility, the same lack of intelligence, the same voice like a bird-

organ, the words of the cruel and charming fable. It is as wearisome and monotonous as a drizzling rain-storm. All the pupils of the "ninth preparatory" will retain a feeling of disgust, for fifteen years at least, toward the most exquisite of our French poets.

Little Amédée feels like crying. He listens with a mingled feeling of fear and stupefaction while the scholars one by one wind off their bobbin. Only to think, to-morrow he will have to do the same thing. He will never be able to do it. M. Tavernier is a great source of anxiety to him, too. Sitting nonchalantly in his chair, the young man with the yellow complexion, who is not devoid of pretension in spite of his black coat that smells of the second-hand shop, files his nails with care, and never opens his mouth except to let fall from it a menace or a punishment.

So, this is school! Amédée calls to mind the nice reading lessons that he used to receive from the elder of the little Gérard girls, that good Louise, already so wise and so sedate, though only ten years old, when she used to point out the letters to him with the end of a knitting-needle in a picture alphabet, and display so much patience and gentleness toward him; and the child, penetrated at the very commencement with the crushing ennui of school, looks out through the window that affords light to the class-room, and watches the noiseless motion of the great serrated leaves of the melancholy plane-tree.

III

ONE, two, three years passed thus without bringing any event worthy of notice to the dwellers on the fifth floor.

There had been no change in the quarter, which still retained its aspect half country-like, half faubourg. At a little more than a musket-shot from the house where the Gérards and the Violettes lived, a great five-story building had gone up, on the roof of which the faded bouquet, placed there by the masons, was still fluttering in the wind, but that was the only innovation. In the vacant lots facing them, that the rotting board fences only partially enclosed, the same growth of nettles was observable, with a browsing goat tethered to a stake ; and on the high wall, above which in the latter days of April the lilacs displayed their sweet-scented clusters, the rains had not yet effaced this coarse declaration of love, traced with a knife upon



AT MONTMARTRE.

the plaster : "Whenever Mélie wishes, she can have me." Signed: "Ugène."

Three years, then, had elapsed, and Amédée had grown somewhat.

In those days, a child born in central Paris—in the labyrinth of malodorous streets that twisted in and out in the region of the Halles, for instance—might have grown to man's estate without having any idea of the succession of the seasons other than that afforded him by the changes of temperature and by the narrow strip of sky which he could catch a glimpse of by twisting his neck. Even at the present day, many poor people's children—the poor never migrate from their sordid dwellings—only know when winter has arrived by the smell of roasting chestnuts ; spring, by the bunches of gilliflowers on the stands of the fruit-sellers ; summer, by the passage of the watering-cart ; and autumn, by the heaps of oyster-shells before the doors of the public-houses. The vast heavens with their towering cloud palaces, the molten gold of the sun setting behind the trees, the enchanted silence of the moonlight on the river, all these grand and magnificent spectacles are reserved for those who inhabit the quarters of fine residences, or who can go there now and then. The son of a worker in jet or of a button-shank maker in the rue des Deux-Portes-Saint-Sauveur spends his childhood in playing on a staircase that smells of lead, or in a court that is like a well, and has no idea of the existence of nature. At the utmost he has a faint suspicion that

such a thing as verdure may exist somewhere on Palm Sunday, when he sees the omnibus horses go by with a bit of evergreen at their ear. What difference does it make, moreover, if the child is possessed of imagination? A star reflected in the gutter will reveal to him the immense poetry of the night, and in the full-blown rose that his neighbor the grisette shakes from her hair he will breathe in all the intoxication of the summer. Amédée, however, had had the good fortune to be born in that delightful and melancholy suburb of Paris which had not yet been "Haussmanized" and which abounded with wild and charming nooks.

His father, poor widower that he was for whom there was no consolation, strove to tire out his grief by long pedestrian excursions, and in the bright evening would take his little boy by the hand and go forth among the solitary places. They followed those charming exterior boulevards of other days, where there were gigantic elms dating back to the days of Louis XIV., ditches overrun with herbage, and broken-down fences, allowing glimpses through their gaps of the fields of the market gardeners, where the glass of the melon frames flashed back the oblique rays of the setting sun. In silence both—the father deep in his memories of the past and Amédée busied with his indistinct childish reveries—they would continue onward in this way for a long, long distance, would pass the *barrière d'Enfer* and reach those unknown regions which at that time produced upon an inhabitant of Mont-

martre the same effect that was formerly produced upon the old *savans* of the middle ages by the sight of these fearful words traced at the corners of their ancient charts : *Mare ignotum*. In those suburban deserts there were no houses, only here and there a lowly cottage, all, or nearly all of them, having but a single story. Sometimes they would meet with a pot-house of forbidding appearance, painted of a dull red color, or perhaps, beneath the acacias, at the forking of two roads badly cut-up with ruts, a little public-house with its arbor, its sign, a miniature windmill on top of a pole, revolving in the cool air of evening. It was almost like the country. The grass was not so dusty, and trenched upon the pathways, even growing in the road-way in the interstices of the pavements. Here and there, upon the summit of the low walls, a poppy flaunted its flaming colors. They made but few encounters except with extremely poor people ; a good woman, maybe, in peasant's cap, dragging along her crying young one, a workman loaded with his tools, an old soldier from the Invalides who had overstayed his leave, and sometimes, in the middle of the road, surrounded by a cloud of dust of their own raising, a flock of wearied sheep, worried by the dogs, bleating despairingly and hastening to the shambles. The father and son would walk straight ahead until it was quite dark beneath the great trees ; then they would return, their faces stung by the biting air, while at wide intervals in the distance of the avenue, the old gallows-shaped lamp-posts,

the tragic "lanternes" of the time of the Terror, were kindling their yellow lights upon the green twilight sky.

These dreary walks, taken in company with a companion as melancholy as was M. Violette and concluding a wearisome day at the Batifol school—Amédée was in the seventh class now, may it please you, and had acquired the information that "Divine goodness" has as its Latin equivalent "*Bonitas Divina*," and that the word *Cornu* is indeclinable—those long, silent hours that he spent before his desk in the class-room or at the side of a pedestrian who was absorbed in his grief, might have been fatal to the child's spirits and cast an everlasting cloud over them, had it not been for his good friends, the Gérards. He went to see them as often as he could, an hour at a time now and again, besides the whole of every Thursday, and the engraver's rooms were always the abode of good-nature and cheerful gayety, where Amédée was conscious of being truly and tranquilly happy.

Those good Gérards ! Just think that in addition to their Louise and their Maria, to say nothing of their Amédée, whom they regarded as one of the family, they had now on their hands, or nearly so, a fourth child, a little girl by the name of Rosine, who was of just the same age as their youngest. This is the way it happened :

Over the Gérard's rooms, in one of the garrets of the sixth story, lived a journeyman printer named Combarieu, that his wife or his mistress—the con-

cierge did not exactly know which, but she was no great shakes, anyway—had planted there with a child eight years old on his hands. What better could you expect from a creature who, as the concierge said, fed her husband and her little girl on cold stuff from the pork-shop, so as to spare herself the trouble of cooking dinner, remained all day in her night-gown with her hair all down reading novels or telling her fortune with the cards, and whom the grocer's son had met one evening at the *bal Ragache*, seated in company with a fireman before a bowl of wine *à la Française*?

During the day Combarieu, although he was a red Republican, sent his little one to the Sisters to be cared for, but the workman was in the habit of going out every evening with an air of great mystery, and would leave the child alone. The concierge, lowering her voice, with that romantic admiration that the lower classes feel for a conspirator, even went so far as to utter that terrible word, "secret society," and declared that the printer had a musket hidden under his mattress.

These revelations were of a nature to arouse M. Gérard's sympathies in favor of his neighbor; the coup d'état and proclamation of the Empire had extremely irritated the good man. What a bitter pill it must have been for him on the day after the 2d of December to engrave—but one's children must have bread, spite of everything—a Bonapartist allegory, entitled "The Uncle and the Nephew," where France was represented extending

her hands to Napoleon First and to Prince Louis, while hovering over the group a crowned eagle, with extended wings, held in one of its talons the Cross of the Legion of Honor !

One day, as the engraver was lighting his pipe—he had given up his Abd-el-Kader and was now smoking a Barbès—he asked his wife if it would not be a good thing for them to pay some little attention to the abandoned little one. Nothing further was required to incite kind-hearted mother Gérard, who more than once had been heard to say : “ What a pity it is ! ” when she had seen little Rosine at night in the concierge’s box, sound asleep on a chair by the stove, waiting for her father. She brought the child to her apartment and made her play with her little girls. Rosine was very pretty with her bright eyes, her funny little Parisian nose and her thick, curly, straw-colored hair escaping from beneath her cheap hat. At first the little huzzy would sometimes let slip some words of the gutter, a “ zut,” or an “ Oh ! là, là ! ” which would elicit from mother Gérard a severe : “ What do I hear, mademoiselle ? ” But the child was intelligent and quickly corrected herself.

One Sunday morning Combarieu, who had heard of the Gérard’s kindness toward his little girl, came down to make a visit of thanks.

Very dark, of a livid complexion, all hair and whiskers and trying to make himself look like the pictures of Christ, the workman, clothed in his long black printer’s blouse, was a perfect realization of

the type of the tribune of the clubs, of the "sublime" of the work-shop. Probably a free-mason, a solemn drunkard who, however, intoxicated himself with big words more than with the little blue wine, he spoke weightily and pretentiously, looked straight before him with great stupid eyes drowned in an ecstatic vagueness, and his entire person brought to one's mind the apostle of the scum. He commanded the engraver's respect at once, and daz-



zled him by the prestige that the audacious have over the unassuming. M. Gérard thought that he had discovered in Combarieu one of those superior men that fate, in its injustice, has placed among the lower classes, and whose genius is stifled by penury.

Enlightened by the bowl of his pipe as to the political leanings of the artist, Combarieu complacently proceeded to sound his own praises. Ac-



ROSINE AND THE APOSTLE.

cording to his story, he had first been an ingenuous fellow, full of dreams of universal fraternity and the holy alliance of the peoples; he had written some poetry that he had printed himself, notable among which were an *Ode to Poland* and an *Epistle to Béranger*, which latter had brought him an autograph letter from the illustrious song-writer. But he was no longer such a simpleton.

“When we have seen what we saw in the days of June and on the second of December, it is no longer a question of sentiment, is it? (At this point, as the engraver, an hospitable man, brings out a bottle of white wine and two glasses: No! excuse me, please, Monsieur Gérard; I never take anything between meals.) The toilers have been deceived, and next time the bourgeois must not be permitted to strangle the republic. (And M. Gérard having uncorked the bottle: Only a thimbleful . . . There, there, that's enough. . . . Well, . . . I hate to refuse.) In the meantime, we must hold ourselves in readiness. The Eastern question is becoming very much mixed just now, and there is Badinguet with something on his hands that will require all his attention. (That little Chablis of yours goes down very smoothly.) If he loses a battle, he is done for. (What! another glass? . . . Ah! you are making me infringe on my habits.) Absolutely done for. But we will keep our eyes open this time . . . hey? no half measures. We must return to the great measures of '93: the Committee of Public Safety, the Law of the Sus-

pects, the Revolutionary Tribunal, all the earthquake, and, if necessary, the guillotine in permanent operation. (Your very good health !)"

Such a display of energy frightened father Gérard a little, who, notwithstanding his Barbès, inclined toward the left centre. He did not venture to say anything in rebuttal, however, and came near blushing as he reflected that the day previous a bookseller had proposed to him to engrave a por-



trait of the new Empress, very décolletée and displaying her famous shoulders, and that he had not said no, his little girls being in need of shoes and his wife having told him the day before that she had not a dress to put on.

So, for some time past there had been four children : Amédée, Louise, Maria and little Rosine Combarieu, all busily occupied in racketing in the Gérard's quarters. They were not little tots, in-

deed, any longer ; there was no more playing at "visits," there was no more hunting the bear-skin cap. They were becoming rational, and the old furniture was accorded a period of tranquillity. It was time, indeed. All the chairs were limping, the two easy-chairs had each lost an arm and the Empire sofa had disgorged half its hair through the wounds in its covering of yellow-green Utrecht velvet.

Among them all, the unfortunate square piano alone had failed to secure an amnesty. More out of tune and more asthmatic than ever, it now stood open all the time, and over its key-board with its worn and yellow keys one might read the inscription that was once so famous : "*Sébastien Erard, manufacturer of pianes and harps to S. A. R. Madame the Duchesse de Berry.*" Not only did Louise, the oldest of the Gérard girls—oh ! a great tall girl, who had taken her second communion, wore her hair up in braids and liked to appear in white waists (how we *do* grow !)—not only did Louise, who was beginning to be a good musician, inflict chromatic punishment on the venerable instrument, but her sister Maria and Amédée had begun to drum out the *Bouquet de Bal* and *Papa les p'tits Bateaux*, and little Rosine, too, who, by virtue of her being a girl of the streets, knew all the songs, would pass hours at a time in picking out the airs with one finger.

What a sediment of the old romanticism remained in the songs of those days. "Orientals" by

the quantity, "Odes and Ballads" by the dozen, "Tales of Spain and Italy" at wholesale, in which one heard only of pages, donjons and chatelaines, of toreros, smugglers and manolas, of washer-women seduced beneath the arch, "near the course of the running stream" by a false and fickle cavalier, and of so many other insipidities. Oh! those songs that have passed away, Amédée will never forget them! They place before him so vividly, so clearly drawn, some of his childhood's hours that were so sweet to him! They all come back to him, with the weather, hot or cold, and the odors that greeted his nostrils at the Gérard's in those times! A certain muleteer's refrain, a pretty Spanish thing, resuscitates for him the engraver at work on his plate before the uncurtained window on a winter's day. It is snowing in the street, and the great white flakes are seen falling slowly behind the window-panes, but the room, its walls covered with paintings and pictures, is made warm and bright by a cheerful coke fire. Amédée beholds himself seated in the chimney corner and learning by heart a page of the *Epitome* that he will have to recite tomorrow at Batifol's; Maria and Rosine are on the floor at his feet before a paste-board box of glass beads which they are stringing to make necklaces for themselves. It is comfortable there; the whole apartment is filled with smoke from the engraver's pipe, and to one side, in the dining-room, the door of which stands half open, Louise at the piano is singing in her fresh young voice some couplets in

which "Castille" rhymes with "Mantille," and "Andalous" with "Jaloux," while her nimble fingers pluck from the weary key-board an accompaniment that tries to imitate the sound of bells and castanets.

Or it may be in the dining-room on a bright spring morning. The window that opens on the balcony is wide open and a great hornet is buzzing noisily above the rose-tree in bloom. Louise is again at the piano; this time she is singing, trying meanwhile to reach the low notes, a dramatic romanza, the theme of which is a Corsican father inciting his child to vengeance:

"Hold, take my rifle!

God will protect thee . . . "

It is a great day in the apartment, this is; it is the day when mother Gérard puts up her gooseberry preserves. There is already a great brass basinful of it standing on the table! The delicious odor! The perfume of the roses mingles with that of the boiling sugar, and so Maria and Rosine—the little gluttons—have sneaked away to the kitchen; but Louise is a big girl and does not allow such a small matter to interfere with her practising. She keeps on singing, trying to make her voice rough like a man's, and just as she is growling out, to Amédée's admiration, with a sombre air and a terrible smashing of chords:

"Child, here is my hate; say, will you share it with me?"

lo! there are the two little huzzies coming back,

each adorned with a pair of pink mustaches and licking her lips voluptuously !

Ah ! those were pleasant hours for little Amédée. They served to console him for the interminable days of ennui that he passed at the Batifol school.

After he had finished his "ninth preparatory" under the guidance of lazy M. Tavernier, constantly busied in paring his nails with the minute



care of a Chinese man of letters, the child had had as professor in the eighth Father Montandeuil, a poor old fellow whom thirty years of his profession had served to stupefy, who secretly indulged himself with the manufacture of five-act tragedies, and who, through going to leave his manuscripts with the porter of the Odéon and coming to take them away again, had ended by marrying the "young lady" of

the lodge and becoming one of the officials of the theatre. Then, in the seventh, Amédée had groaned beneath the tyranny of a *Sieur Prudhommod*, a peasant with a smattering of Latin, a man of unreasoning violence, who distributed through the class abuse worthy of a cartman ; and now he was just commencing in the sixth class under M. Bance, an unfortunate youth of twenty, ugly, lame, and



timid to the point of foolishness, whom M. Batifol used to reproach in bitter terms because he could not make himself respected, and whose eyes would fill with tears when, on coming to his turbulent class, the first thing he had to do every morning was to take a rag and wipe out his own caricature that one of his pupils had drawn upon the black-board.

Everything at Batifol's school, the wretched, grotesque masters, the cruel and cynical scholars,

the class-rooms that stank of dust and ink, the mournful plane-tree in the court, everything saddened Amédée and disgusted him. Although very intelligent, perhaps he might have conceived an unconquerable loathing for instruction doled out in this way, as soup is to soldiers, had it not been for his little friend Louise Gérard, who, with the kindness that was part of her nature, had constituted herself the superintendent of his studies, guiding and encouraging him ; she even penetrated a little the rudiments of Lhomond and Alexandre's dictionary, so as to assist the child in the struggle with his *De Viris*. Woe to him who has not had a petticoat at his side in childhood, a sweet womanly influence ; he will preserve all his life long something brutal in his mind, something cruel in his heart. Amédée would have been exposed to that danger had it not been for that excellent Louise. His mother was dead, alas ! and M. Violette, yielding more and more to his grief, neglected his son a little, it must be confessed.

For the poor widower could find no consolation. He looked ten years older since his wife's death, and his refractory lock had become quite gray. Just think ! his Lucie had been the sole joy in the obscure and commonplace life of the poor quill-driver. She was so pretty, so gentle, and such a good housekeeper, always guided by her innate idea of elegance, dressing on almost nothing, making herself charming with a flower ! M. Violette lived

only for this beloved and cruel memory, was constantly reviving in imagination that humble idyl of his.

Ten years had now elapsed since that idyl. One of his old fellow clerks had taken him with him to spend the evening with an old friend, who was a captain at the Invalides. The good man—he had lost his right arm at Waterloo—was Lucie's godfather. He was an old bachelor of lively and cheerful temperament, and liked to get up in his quarters, that he had converted into a sort of Bonapartist Chapel, little parties with cakes and punch, of which Lucie's mother, a kind of remote cousin of the captain's, used to do the honors. M. Violette had at once noticed the young girl where she sat under a picture of the battle of the Pyramids, above which were two crossed sabres, with a red carnation in her hair. It was in the middle of summer, and the splendid moonlight could be seen through the open windows robing the esplanade in white and glittering on the bright surface of the captured guns, trophies of the valor of our armies. They had been playing a game of forfeits, and when it came Lucie's turn to stand in the centre of the circle of guests and ask: "Where is he? . . . How do you love him?" . . . M. Violette, to relieve her of her embarrassment, had answered so awkwardly that every one exclaimed: "Aha! you are cheating!" And what artless grace, what attractive modesty she had shown when she served the tea, going from one to another with a cup in her hand and followed

by the old one-armed soldier in epaulettes, carrying the cake !

M. Violette had visited the retired soldier again and again so as to catch another glimpse of her. Most generally, however, he only found the captain, who would inflict on him the story of his battles and victories, the assault of the redoubt at the Borodino, where he had received his decoration, and Murat with his great plumes and the "*Nom de Dieu !*" of the King of Naples, bursting like a thunder-clap as he hurled his squadrons on the enemy. At last, one fine evening in autumn, a Sunday when the skies were soft and clear, he had found himself alone for an instant with the girl in the private garden of the old officer of the Old Guard. He had taken a seat upon the stone bench beside Lucie, had confessed his love beneath the searching look of the little corporal in bronzed plaster that stood there, and she, suddenly seized with a delicious embarrassment, had answered : "Ask mamma," casting down her timid eyes upon the clump of china-asters that were bordered by a little hedge of box fashioned into the shape of a Cross of the Legion of Honor.

And now it was all gone, forever lost ! The captain was dead, Lucie's mother was dead, his beloved Lucie was dead, after giving him six years—yes ! six short years—of unclouded happiness.

Certainly not, he would not marry again—oh ! never !—neither would he ever look for a mistress.

No woman had ever lived, and never should live, for him, than the poor darling who was sleeping out there in the cemetery Montparnasse, whose grave he went to visit every Sunday, with a little watering-pot concealed under his coat.

He remembered with a shudder of disgust how, a few months after his Lucie's death, he had taken a seat on one of the benches of the Luxembourg and was listening to the drums under the trees beating tattoo, when a woman had come and seated herself near him and stared at him. Overmastered by his senses, he had replied to her when she said in a manner that was at once timid and brazen : " So, you are out taking the air ? " and when she had at last asked : " Are you coming home with me ? " he had gone with her. Scarcely had he entered the house, however, when all the past rose up before him ; he had felt as if he were strangling in his distress. Throwing himself into a chair, he had hid his face in his hands and sobbed, and his suffering was so acute that the wretched woman, with an instinct of feminine pity, had taken his head in her arms, saying to him to console him : " Cry ! Cry ! . . . It will do you good ! " and soothing him as she would a little child. At length he had succeeded in disengaging himself from this caress that inspired him only with a feeling of shame, and flinging upon the marble top of the commode what little money he had about him, had fled and returned to his room, where, throwing himself hastily upon his bed, he had wept his fill, biting his pillow mean-

while. . . . Oh! the horrible, horrible recollection!

No, never again a wife, never a mistress! His grief was now to be his mistress and share his couch with him.

The moment that was most dreadful of all to the



bereaved man was that of his awakening—his solitary awakening in the great bed where there was now only a single pillow. There it was that in bygone days he had waked every morning and found his dear Lucie and had the exquisite pleasure of looking at her as she slept, for she was not fond of early rising, and at times he had even jokingly

scolded her for her laziness. How peaceful was that sweet, delicate face, resting there in the disorder of the loosened hair! How chaste in its careless pose was the young woman's charming form! She had thrown one of her arms outside the coverings and the chemise had slipped down from her neck, exposing the pure, rounded, but rather thin shoulder and the commencement of a delicate bust. In the warmth of the bed, she exhaled a soft odor of life, something like the perfume of a flower of flesh. He bent over her parted lips to inhale her breath, and as he did so he was possessed by a tender pride, a nuptial gratulation at the thought that this charming creature, almost a child still, was his wife, his companion, and that this heart that he could feel beating in the young bosom had given itself to him forever. He could no longer restrain himself; he touched the young woman's lips with his; she started beneath the kiss and opened her eyes, in which the wonder of awakening changed immediately to a happy smile beneath her husband's gaze. Oh! the ineffableness of that moment! . . . But for all that, it would not do to loiter; he must remember that the milk-woman had hung her tin measure to the door-knob of the apartment more than an hour ago, that the fire was not lighted and that he must be at the office in good season, the time for the annual gratuities being close at hand; and so, giving another kiss to his sleepy Lucie, whose eyes were already closing again, he said to her in a coaxing voice:

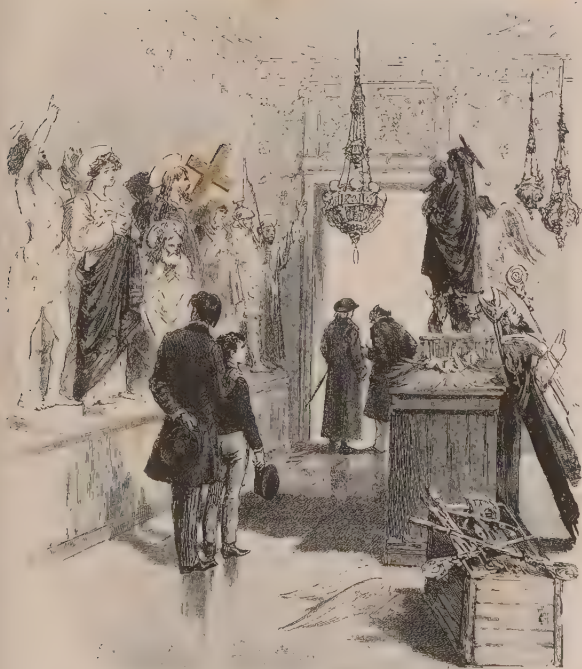
“Come, Lucie, my child, it is half past eight. . . .
Get up ! Get up ! little lazy-bones !”

What consolation was there for him for these delights that were irretrievably lost ? He had his son—well, yes, and he was very fond of him. But the sight of Amédée served to revive M. Violette’s grief, for the child, who was growing fast, was beginning to resemble his dear mother more and more every day.

IV

THREE or four times in the course of each year M. Violette, accompanied by his son, was in the habit of paying a visit to an uncle of his deceased wife from whom he had some hopes that Amédée might one day receive an inheritance.

M. Isidore Gaufre had founded and for twenty years prosperously conducted a large Catholic book and picture shop, which he had subsequently supplemented by an abundant stock of religious objects of all sorts. This great establishment, to which the proprietor by a stroke of genius had given the name of the "*Bon Marché des Paroisses*," and which had a reputation among all the Catholic clergy, had finally settled down in the main building and dependencies of an old hotel in the rue Servandoni, which displayed all the ornate and grandiose characteristics of the architecture of the end of the seventeenth century. All day long ecclesiastics



M. GAUFRE'S ESTABLISHMENT IN THE RUE SERVANDONI.

and gentlemen of clerical appearance were climbing the steps of the imposing portico that led to the spacious *rez-de-chaussée*, to which light was imparted through lofty windows surmounted by grotesque masks. Here the long-bearded missionary, before embarking for the Gaboon or the farthest East, came to purchase his chaplets of glass or imitation coral with which he intended to convert the negroes and the Chinese ; the lay delegate, enfolded in a long brown frock-coat and clasping tenderly in his arms an immense umbrella, secured dirt cheap and by thousands at a time pamphlets for the Catholic propaganda ; the country curate as he passed through Paris, in consideration of the immediate delivery of a plated monstrance in the Byzantine style, signed a number of notes at long date, allowing his zeal to run him into debt and counting on the generosity of the faithful to enable him to meet his engagements. There appeared there also the young spiritual director in search of a refined devotional work for some fair penitent, the duodecimo, for instance, entitled : *The Tears of Widowhood Wiped Away by Saint François de Sales* ; the candidate for the deputyship in a very orthodox region, endeavoring to obtain a discount on twelve hideously decorated Roads of the Cross, which he was intending to present to the parishes where his adversaries had accused him of being a Voltairian ; the Brother of the Christian Doctrine or the Sister of St. Vincent de Paul who needed catechisms or edifying tracts for their schools. Sometimes, even,

a prince of the Church, a bishop of aristocratic appearance, enveloped in a warm great-coat of ample dimensions, his Roman hat surrounded by its green cord with golden tassels, would shut himself up mysteriously for an hour's space in the private office of M. Isidore Gaufre, who would reconduct his distinguished visitor to the portico with abject humility, lavishing on him his "Monseigneurs" and bowing obsequiously beneath the haughty benediction of two violet-gloved fingers.

It was certainly not through any feeling of sympathy that M. Violette had remained on good terms with his wife's uncle, for M. Gaufre, while polite to the point of servility toward those whom it was his interest to treat with consideration, was intentionally scornful and at times insolent toward those who could not in any way serve his ends. He had shown but small regard for his niece during her lifetime, and all that he had given her for a wedding present was one of those ivory crucifixes with a shell to hold holy-water which the merchant in devotional articles manufactured by the gross for the use of the convents. Architect of his own fortune and having already amassed, so it was reported, considerable wealth, M. Gaufre had a very low opinion of this poor devil of a clerk who was so slow in obtaining promotion and was doubtless lazy and incapable. M. Violette had a shrewd suspicion of the unfavorable judgment that the "Bondieusard," as he inwardly called him, had formed upon his own account by the reception which he habitually met with

in the rue Servandoni. If, subduing his innate sentiment of self-respect, he went there from time to time, it was only on his son's account that he did so, for M. Gaufre was rich, M. Gaufre was no longer young; who knows? . . . perhaps he might remember Amédée in his will, eh? It was best that he should see the child now and then, and so M. Violette, obedient to his duty as a father, constrained himself three or four times a year to make the wearisome visit to the *Bon Marché des Paroisses* (the Parochial Bargain Shop).

The hopes that M. Violette was building in his son's favor upon the inheritance of M. Gaufre were, however, very problematical, for the clerk, whom the proprietor of the devotional bazaar could not avoid inviting to his table now and then, had been impressed, and even shocked, by the despotic sway and familiar manner of the servant, a splendid specimen of the girls of Normandy, answering to the royal name of Berenice. The saucy ways of this handsome and well-built huzzy showed that she was a favorite as evidently as did the diamonds that glistened in her ears, and there was no reason to doubt that this mistress-servant would keep a sharp eye on her master's will, sexagenarian as he was, with an apoplectic neck, and who was always purple after he had taken his *pousse-café*.

M. Gaufre, although he was administrator to the vestry of Saint-Sulpice and very regular in his religious observances, had always been addicted to ancillary liaisons. His wife—he had been a widower

for the last ten years—had all her life been one of those unfortunate women of whom people say:



“That poor Mrs. So and So is greatly to be pitied; she can never keep a servant.” All in vain was it that she had sent to the remote provinces and se-

cured plain girls whose virtue was warranted. One after the other, a Flemish girl, three from the Nivernais, an Alsatian, two from Picardy and even a young girl from the Beauce with a diploma of winner of the rose had been pitilessly devoured by the minotaur of the rue Servandoni. They had all been turned away, with a box on the ear conscientiously administered, by the justly irritated mistress, and luckily for M. Gaufre, none of these Hagars had presented him with an Ishmael. When a widower, the "Bondieusard" (religious hypocrite) could abandon himself in full security to his proclivities, without, however, causing scandal. Other country girls, wearing strange head-dresses, made favorable answer, in many different dialects, to his culpable propositions. An Alsatian top-knot reigned six months, a Breton mob-cap more than a year. In the end, however, that happened which it was fated should happen; the monogamist that is dormant in every libertine awoke, and the fair Berenice fastened her chains for good and all upon the fickle M. Gaufre, whom age had made constant. She was all-powerful in the house, where she ruled by the two-fold title of her redundant charms and a remarkable knack of cooking that she had; and as she beheld her master's face suffused with blood at the dessert of every meal, it was inevitable that she should form some reflections as to the future. There was everything to fear, therefore, in this direction. Who could even say whether M. Gaufre, who, after all, was very much of a devotee, might not have con-

scientious scruples some fine day and end by a marriage *in extremis*?

M. Violette was aware of this condition of affairs ; nevertheless it was his wish that Amédée should not be overlooked by his venerable relative, and sometimes, though infrequently, he would leave his desk a little earlier than usual, go and wait for his boy at the dismissal of Batifol's school and conduct him to the rue Servandoni.

The great drawing-rooms, transformed into shops, on the neglected panels of which were still to be seen pictures of rococo shepherds making offerings of doves to their shepherdesses, always afforded new cause of wonder to Amédée.

After passing through the book-store, where thousands of little volumes in gray or yellow paper covers were crowded upon the shelves and where shop-boys in brown holland blouses were deftly tying up bundles, the department of gold and silver-plated ware was reached. All the showy tinsel luxury of the church was glittering there in handsome glass cases—gilded tabernacles with the Lamb reposing in a flaming triangle, censers with four chains, stoles and chasubles heavy with embroidery, immense candelabra, monstrances and cups encrusted with enamels and mock jewels ; and in presence of all this magnificence, the child, who had read the *Thousand and One Nights*, thought that he must have got into Aladdin's cavern, or the cave of Abou-Hassem. One passed by a sudden transition from all this splendor to the sombre re-

pository of ecclesiastical vestments. Here everything was black ; all that one could see was great piles of cassocks and pyramids of broad-brimmed hats. Two manikins alone, one in the purple of the cardinal, the other in the bishop's violet, served to impart a little color to the dusky shop.

But it was the great room where the painted statues were that particularly excited Amédée's wonder. There they all were, the idols of the devotees and the small chapels, standing upon the shelves in the hap-hazard promiscuousness of a row of onions. No hierarchy there. The Evangelist's neighbor was a little Jesuit saint dating back only to day before yesterday ; Fourier was happy in being placed beside the Virgin Mother ; the Saviour was elbow to elbow with Saint Labre. There they all stood, aligned like so many recruits at the beat of the drum ; moulded in plaster in coarse matrices or carved out of wood with a hatchet ; besmeared with loud coloring, the red of the wine-seller or the blue of the barber ; loaded with cheap gilding ; with nose in air, open mouth and eyes rolling in ecstasy ; resplendent with varnish and horribly ugly in their newness ; the mitred bishop, the martyr bearing his palm, Saint Agnes embracing her lamb, Saint Roch with his dog and his shells, John the Baptist in raiment of sheep-skin ; and the most ridiculous of all, perhaps, was poor Saint Vincent de Paul, holding in his arms three naked babies, for all the world like a midwife's sign.

This repulsive exhibition, which was akin to the

Tussaud museum and the massacre play, struck terror to the soul of Amédée. He had recently partaken of his first communion and the mystic fervor was still burning within him, but so much ugliness was offensive to his delicate perceptions and was the cause of his earliest doubts.

M. Violette and his son reach the "*Bon Marché des Paroisses*" one day about five o'clock and find uncle Isidore in the room of the painted statues, superintending the packing of a St. Michael. The last customer of the day, the Bishop of Trebizond *in partibus*, has just that moment left the shop, favoring M. Gaufre with his blessing, and the apoplectic little man, in his black wig like that of a sprinkler of holy-water, is now alone with his clerks and no longer obliged to put a restraint upon himself.

"Attend to what you are doing, you awkward lout!" he exclaims to the young man who is depositing the archangel in the shavings; "you will break the dragon's tail."

Then perceiving M. Violette and Amédée, who have just come in, he says:

"Oh! it is you, Violette. . . . How are you? . . . How are you, Amédée? You come at a bad time; we are just sending away the goods sold and I have my hands full. . . . Hallo! Monsieur Combiere! don't forget the thirteen dozen *Apparitions of la Salette* in stucco for Grenoble, with a discount of twenty-five per cent. off the face of the bill. . . . And Amédée still keeps on working hard? . . .

What did you say ? . . . Head of his class and was present at the banquet of Saint Charlemagne ? . . . Well, well, so much the better. . . . Jules, have the six chandeliers, the silver-gilt pyx and the Road of the Cross number two for the ladies of the Sacred Heart at Alençon been despatched yet ? What, not yet ! . . . Why, the order is three days old. Hurry up, now, like a good fellow. . . . You see, Violette, that I am up to my ears in work. . . . But come in, come in, just for a moment."

And having instructed his cashier, undergoing captivity in his glass cage, to send to the sheriff's officer the notes that the *cure* of Sourdeval (Manche) has allowed to go to protest, uncle Isidore takes M. Violette and his son into his private office.

It is an old-time boudoir, and M. Gaufre, who looks at things austere, has vainly tried to mortify it by introducing an iron safe, some pasteboard boxes and an old horse-hair sofa that seems to have been taken from some vestry-room ; the graceful apartment, circular and lofty, with its great window opening on a garden, its ceiling decorated with rosy aerial clouds and its fine wood-work carved in garlands and bows and quivers of the god of love still preserves a little of its elegant charm of days gone by. Amédée would take pleasure in looking at it were it not that uncle Isidore, who is sitting at his desk, forthwith puts an unkind question to M. Violette.

"Now I think of it, that promotion that you were counting on last year, did you get it?"

"Unfortunately, I did not, M. Gaufre. . . . Ah! the Government, you know . . ."

"Yes, it is very slow; but you are not overwhelmed with work, either. . . . While in business, what anxieties, what worriment! . . . I envy you sometimes, you fellows who can take an hour to sharpen your pencil. . . . Well, what's wanted now?"

For a clerk, with a pencil behind his ear, has made his appearance at the open door.

"It is M. the Superior of Foreign Missions who requests to speak to Monsieur."

"You see how it is, . . . not a minute that I can call my own. Some other time, my dear M. Violette. Good-by, my little man. . . . It is surprising how like he is to poor Lucie. . . . You ought to come and breakfast with me some Sunday without ceremony. Berenice has a receipt for *soufflé au fromage*—something delicious. . . . Let M. the Superior come in."

And M. Violette takes his departure, ill-pleased with his useless visit and angry with uncle Isidore, who has hardly been polite.

"That man is perfectly selfish," he sadly reflects, "and that woman has him in her clutches. My poor Amédée will get nothing."

Amédée, for his part, does not allow his uncle's inheritance to worry him. He is now in the fourth class, following the course of the Lycée Henri IV. in company with his comrades at Batifol's school.

He has grown tall suddenly, and regrets that he has to wear his trousers too short. He has long since given up his little childish distractions ; the clowns undergoing the penalty of hanging that illustrate the pages of his Burnouf's grammar date from a year ago, and he has entirely abandoned the education of silk-worms in his desk. Everything indicates that he will never be a practical man ; he finds geometry unattractive, he cannot retain a single date in his memory, and on holidays he likes to take solitary walks in the quiet streets, stopping at the book-stalls to read the poets and lingering until late in the Luxembourg for a view of the setting sun. Thou wilt be a dreamer, my Amédée, a dreamer and a sentimentalist. So much the worse for thee !

At the Gérards', where he goes very often, it is no longer *thee* and *thou* with his little friends. Louise is now seventeen. Thin, colorless, flat-chested, she certainly never will be pretty. People are beginning to say when they speak of her : "She has fine eyes and is an excellent musician." Her sister Maria is twelve and is a little rose-bud.

The neighbor's child, little Rosine Combarieu, has disappeared. The printer moved away one night without a word of warning, without bidding any one good-by, taking his little one with him. The concierge relates that he had compromised himself in a political plot and had to make his flitting by the light of the stars. It is believed that he is in hiding at la Villette.

Father Gérard bears him no ill-will for having thus taken French leave without saying farewell. The conspiring printer has preserved all his prestige in the memory of the old engraver, who, by special hard luck, it would seem, continues to be employed by a print-seller who makes a specialty of Bonapartist engravings, and at the present moment he is engaged upon the execution of a portrait of the Prince Imperial in his uniform of Corporal of the Grenadiers of the Guard, with an immense bear-skin cap on his little head.

He is getting old, is father Gérard. His beard that once was yellow and the few hairs that are left to him are silvery white, that charming white which is, as it were, the long deferred reward of red-headed people and which matches so well with their sanguine complexion. He is getting old, the poor good man, as is his wife, who is beginning to get uncomfortably corpulent and ejaculates "whew!" as she sits down on a chair after climbing the five flights. He is getting old, is father Gérard, like everything about him, like the house facing theirs that he saw built and that has long since lost the appearance of a new structure; he is getting old, as is proved by the fact that the grocer—the one that perfumes the street every morning by grinding his coffee on the sidewalk—has had his shop painted afresh. He is getting old, like his old-fashioned furniture, like his mended cups and saucers, like his engravings that look as if they had been dipped in tobacco-juice, and their frames where the gold

has changed to red, and, more than all else, like the Érard piano upon which Louise, an accomplished virtuoso, now plays the sets of Beethoven's waltzes and Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words," and which, poor old faithful servant, retains only the thin and trembling tones of an harmonica.

He is getting old, the poor artist is, and worries about the future ; for he has been unable to command success as did his school-mate, that intriguing Damourette, who stole the *Prix de Rome* from him through favoritism and who now poses at the Institute as a handsome man in his embroidered coat and secures all the paying orders, while he, like a simpleton, saddled himself with a family while a young man and has never been able to save anything, though toiling like a day-laborer. He may fall down in an apoplectic fit some of these fine mornings and leave his widow penniless and his daughters without a marriage-portion. He thinks of all these things sometimes as he rams the tobacco into his pipe ; and it is not cheerful, *fichtre de fichtre !*

If father Gérard's thoughts take on sombre tints as he ages, M. Violette is really an object that demands our pity. How old may he be ? Certainly not more than forty, but what decay is manifest ! Can it be that our griefs make our years count double ? The widower is but the wreck of a man. His rebellious lock, now of a dirty gray, is always hanging over his right eye, and he no longer troubles himself to brush it back behind his ear. His hands

tremble a little, his memory is leaving him. More reserved and taciturn than ever, he seems interested in nothing, not even in his son's studies; he comes in late, trifles a little with his dinner, and again goes out with unsteady step into the dark streets. At his office, where he still continues to do his work in a mechanical fashion, his fate has been decided; he will never receive the appointment of second head clerk. "How brutalized he is!" his fellow clerk who occupies the same room with him says when he speaks of him, a young man with a future before him, a protégé of the head of the bureau, who follows the races and has not his equal for imitating the "gnouf! gnouf!" of the actor Grassot. A man of that age does not sink so rapidly; it is not natural. What is it then that has reduced M. Violette to such a state of feebleness and misery?

Alas! it must be told. The wretched man's courage has failed him; he sought for consolation in his despair and found it in a vice.

Every afternoon M. Violette, upon leaving his office, enters a squalid little café in the rue du Four. He goes and seats himself on the bench at the rear of the place, in the darkest corner, and in a low voice, as if ashamed, calls for his first absinthe. His first? Yes, for he will drink two, and even three; he swallows them down gently, in sips, conscious of the cerebral intoxication of the powerful green liqueur slowly creeping up within him. Let the fortunate ones of this world blame him if they

will! It is there, his elbows on the marble table looking, and yet seeing nothing, through the pyramids of blocks of sugar and of punch-bowls at the woman behind the counter, her well-greased chignon reflected in the mirror behind her, it is there that the poor inconsolable finds oblivion for his woes; still more, it is there that he renews for an hour his joys of other days, for by a phenomenon that is familiar to absinthe drinkers, he directs, he controls his intoxication, and it affords him the longed-for dreams.

“Waiter, an absinthe!”

M. Violette is again the husband of twenty-five, adoring his wife and adored by her.

It is winter; he is sitting by an expiring fire, and before him, in the circle of light thrown by the green shade on which little black silhouettes of jockeys are racing at breakneck speed, his young wife, reclining in the great easy-chair, is busy with her embroidery. At every instant they look at each other with smiling eyes, he over his book, she over her work, and the lover never tires of wondering at the activity and graceful movements of his Lucie's fingers. She is too charming! He suddenly throws himself on his knees before her, slips an arm around her waist, and gives her a long kiss; then, overcome with languor, he bows his head upon his loved one's lap and delightedly listens as she says in a low voice: “That's right, sir. . . . Go to sleep, baby darling!” And he feels her soft hand as it gently strokes his hair.

“Waiter, another absinthe !”

They are in that lovely flower-enamelled meadow near the wood of Verrières on a magnificent after-



noon in June as the sun is setting and the intense heat is beginning to abate. She has collected a splendid bouquet of wild-flowers ; she stops at every

instant to add to it a corn-flower, and he follows, carrying her cloak and the umbrella. What a beautiful thing is love at summer-tide, how sweet it is ! They are a little tired, for they have been scouring the country all this luminous Sunday. It is dinner-time, and right here, under the lindens, is the little inn, with its swing and its croquet ground, where the whiteness of the table-linen imparts a cheerful aspect to the grove. They select a table, order their dinner from a waiter with mustaches, and wait for the soup to come. Lucie, quite red after her day in the open air and quiet by reason of her hunger, occupies herself with looking at the blue designs on the plates representing the battles in Africa. What a gay little dinner it is ! There are mushrooms in the omelette, mushrooms in the stewed kidneys, mushrooms in the *filet-madère*, but so much the better ! they are both very fond of mushrooms. And the nice little wine ! Upon my word, the dear child is a little bit tipsy at dessert. What does she do but take a cherry-pit between her thumb and first finger and discharge it—bang !—right against her husband's nose ! And she laughs, the naughty girl ! But he, to revenge himself—"Wait ! Just wait a minute !" he says—rises, bends over the little table, and puts two fingers down her neck inside the collar ; and the mischievous body, drawing her head down into her shoulders and shaken by a fit of nervous laughter, has to beg : "Don't, don't, I beseech you !" for she does not like to be tickled. But the best part of their excursion is the

return through the nocturnal landscape, in the delicious odor of the new-mown hay, along the road that is vaguely defined beneath the summer sky, where the constellations are glittering and across which the Milky-Way pours its diamond waves like a voiceless mountain-torrent. Tired and happy, she hangs on her husband's arm. How he loves her! Good God, how he loves her! It seems to him that his love for his Lucie is as immense and deep as the night. "There is no one on the road. . . . Put up thy mouth, thy dear mouth!" And their kisses are so sweet, so pure, so trusting, that the angels should rejoice as they look down upon them!

"Another absinthe, waiter. . . . One more!"

And the wretched man forgets for a few instants longer that he must soon return to the sad abode where his loved Lucie is no more, the abode where the servant has long since arranged the evening meal upon the oil-cloth table-cover and where his son is awaiting him, yawning with hunger and reading from a book placed beside his plate. He forgets the horrible moment of return, when he will endeavor to conceal his drunken condition by an affectation of ill-humor, and will even take his seat at table without kissing Amédée, so that the child may not perceive the smell of alcohol upon his breath.

V

WHILE all these events were occurring, however, the old fellow with big wings and long white beard who figures in allegory—Time, to wit—had turned his hour-glass several times, or to speak in more simple language, the letter-carrier, his blue hooded cloak powdered with flakes of the New Year's snow, had presented himself three or four times at the dwellings of those whom he served, to offer them, in consideration of a gratuity, a calendar filled with useful information, such as the computation of the holy days of the Church or the difference between the Gregorian year and the Arabian Hegira, and Amédée Violette had quite imperceptibly grown to be a young man.

A young man ! that is to say, a being possessed of a treasure of the value of which he knows nothing, almost like a darkey in the heart of Africa



"COLONEL AND THE MISSES LANTZ!"

who might chance to pick up M. de Rothschild's check-book ; a young man, such as we have all been, waiting impatiently for the down on his chin to change to horrid wild boar's bristles ; a young man, awaking every morning full of hope and ingenuously wondering what lucky thing was to happen him during the day—and who passed his life in dreaming instead of living, because he was timid and because he was poor.

It was in those days that Amédée—he was no longer an attendant at Batifol's and was completing his course of philosophy as a day-scholar at the Lycée Henri IV.—then it was that Amédée became more closely acquainted with one of his comrades, Maurice Roger by name, and that the two young men became united by the ties of a tender friendship, one of those tender attachments of eighteen which are, perhaps, the sweetest and most lasting in the world.

It was a case of love at first sight ; Amédée had been attracted to Maurice by his pretty head of light, curly hair, his air of candor and superiority and his handsome clothes that he wore with a gentlemanly *desinvoltura*. Twice every day, when they issued forth from the college building, they would wend their way across the Luxembourg, exchanging hopes and dreams and loitering in the alleys, where, even then, Maurice would boldly ogle the grisettes ; and conversing with the charming unreserve of their age, the sincere age when every word is the true expression of a thought, all at

once they became familiar to the point of addressing each other *as thou*.

Maurice informed his new-found friend that he was the only son of an officer who had met his death at Sebastopol, that his mother had not married again and that she idolized him and let him have his way in everything. He was impatiently looking forward to the end of his studies, when he would live in freedom in the Latin Quarter, pursue his law course at his leisure, since his mother wanted him to study law and he would not displease her, but also do something in painting, in an amateurish way at least, for he was passionately devoted to art. The handsome, aristocratic young man said all this with a happy smile that dilated his nostrils and lingered on his sensual lips, and Amédée admired this trust in the future, this delight in existence with all the generous warmth of youth, without a single envious thought.

He, in turn, made his confidences to Maurice. Not quite all, though. He could not tell any one that he suspected his father's secret vice, that it made him blush, that he suffered on account of it—as much as youth can suffer. He confessed, however, brave heart that he was, with no feeling of false shame, his humble origin; he spoke warmly of his lowly friends, the Gérards, extolled the goodness of his tall friend Louise, and went into raptures over little Maria, who was just turning her sixteenth year and was growing to be pretty, very pretty!

“You will take me to see them, will you not?”

said Maurice, who had listened to his friend with his accustomed urbanity. "But first you must come and dine with me some day and let me present you to my mother. . . . Sunday next, say. . . . Is it a bargain?"

Amédée would rather have declined. It occurred to him like a flash—how bitter, how incessant are the tortures that youth has to endure on account of poverty!—that his Sunday coat was almost as seedy as the one that he wore every day, that his best pair of shoes were worn down at the heel and that the collar and cuffs of the most presentable of his six shirts were frayed by the number of visits which they had made to the washerwoman. And then what a trying experience it would be for him to go and dine in the city! How would he be able to "present himself in a *salon*?" It made a cold chill run down his back just to think of it. But Maurice's invitation was so cordial that it was irresistible, and Amédée accepted.

The following Sunday, therefore, at seven o'clock precisely, dressed in his very best—what could have been the shop-girl's idea in insisting on his taking a pair of dog-skin gloves of a bright red color? he could see very clearly now that they were too new and too showy for the rest of his costume—Amédée ascended to the first story of a handsome house in the faubourg Saint-Honoré and timidly rang the left-hand bell.

The door was opened by a young and pretty waiting-maid—one of those brunettes with a waist

that can be clasped by your two hands and just the suspicion of a mustache—who showed him into a drawing-room furnished in a style of quiet



and comfortable luxuriousness. Maurice was there alone, standing with his back to the fire, in an attitude as if he was the master of the house. He

received his friend with the warmest demonstrations of attachment, and Amédée's eyes were immediately attracted to the portrait of a handsome lieutenant of artillery dressed in the long-skirted uniform coat of 1845 and the belt fastened by two lion's heads. The officer was depicted in full-dress uniform, sitting beneath a palm-tree in the midst of the desert.

"It is my father," said Maurice. "Don't you think I am like him?"

The resemblance was really a striking one. The same bright, cheerful smile, the same blond curly locks. Amédée was on the point of expressing himself to that effect when a woman's voice behind him repeated, like a belated echo :

"Is not Maurice like him?"

It was Madame Roger, who had entered unobserved. In presence of this handsome lady in black with her Roman profile and her complexion of the pallor of ivory, who displayed her emotion as she turned from her son to her husband's portrait, Amédée understood how it was that Maurice was his mother's idol. Deeply impressed by the appearance of the stately widow, who would have been beautiful still were it not for her gray hair and the eye-lids where many tears had left their traces, as he was stammering out some words of thanks for his invitation:

"My son," she said, "has spoken to me of you as him whom he most loved among his young companions. I am also aware of the affection that

you have for him. It is I who should thank you, Monsieur Amédée."

They seated themselves and conversed, and every moment Mme. Roger would utter these words: "My son . . . My son Maurice," in an accent of pride and passionate fondness. Amédée could see how pleasant must be the life of his friend with such a good mother, and he could not help contrasting with it his own dismal childhood, recalling in particular how cheerless the evening meal had been for some years past, during which he would bury his face in his plate so as to avoid his father's eyes, swimming in intoxication, constantly fixed upon him and seeming to ask his pardon.

Maurice allowed his mother to continue her eulogy for awhile, watching her with his bright smile that was gradually growing more tender. At last, however, he interrupted her.

"That is all settled, mamma. . . . I am a phoenix." And he went to her with a laughing face and kissed her.

At this juncture the pretty waiting-maid announced "Monsieur and Mesdemoiselles Lantz," and Mme. Roger rose with alacrity to receive the new-comers.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lantz of the engineers, who had received Captain Roger's last breath in the trenches before the Mamelon-Vert, had perhaps once been a good-looking officer in his uniform with black velvet facings, but he had long since been relegated to the labors of the office, where he

had grown old over his plans and working-drawings, constantly seated at a long table littered with squares, dividers, rulers and compasses. Whatever martial appearance he might once have had was destroyed by his bare poll like the head of some old bird that has had its feathers pulled out, his gray and melancholy beard, and the leanness of his bent form that was accentuated still more by the military cut of his closely buttoned frock-coat. A widower, his head all the time filled with mathematical formulas, with no fortune and three marriageable girls on his hands, the poor colonel, who only took his uniform from the camphor in which it was preserved two or three times a year and donned it for official solemnities, was in the habit of dining regularly every Sunday with Mme. Roger, who had a kind feeling for the worthy man as having been her husband's dearest friend, and who had from the very first also invited his three little girls, perfect images of each other, with cheeks that were too red and pug noses and little black eyes like plums, and always so carefully got up as to their hair and their apparel generally that one involuntarily compared them to three handsome iced cakes prepared for a wedding feast.

They took their places at table. Mine. Roger had an excellent cook, and Amédée, for the first time in his life, tasted dishes that were even more delicious than mother Gérard's little ragouts. It was nothing more than an ordinary, well served dinner, but to the young man it was a revelation of

delights that he had never formed any idea of. The flower-decked table, the cover, so soft to the touch of the hand, the dishes that excited the appetite while they appeased it, the wines of varied



flavors, that had the sweet odor of flowers, what new and agreeable sensations did all these things afford ! The service was performed quickly and noiselessly by the pretty waitress. Maurice sat facing his

mother and did the honors of the repast with charming gayety. At every bright, pleasant remark of his, Mme. Roger's pale face would be illumined as by a ray of sunlight, the three Misses Lantz, all in concert, would break out in a discreet little laugh, and even the melancholy colonel himself would shake off his torpor for a moment.

With the second glass of Burgundy he seemed to be inspired with new life, and his conversation became quite interesting. He spoke of the Crimean campaign, that chivalrous warfare in which the officers of the two hostile armies exchanged compliments and cigars whenever there was a short truce, and related some entertaining anecdotes of military life. Mme. Roger, however, as she beheld her boy's bright face light up with enthusiasm at these heroic stories, had suddenly become pensive. Maurice was the first to take notice of it.

"Be careful, colonel!" he exclaimed. "You will frighten mamma, and she will take it in her head that I am still desirous of entering at Saint Cyr. . . . But come! little mother, don't be alarmed. Since it is your wish, your respectful and obedient son will be a briefless lawyer and will paint bad pictures in his spare moments. Perhaps he would have preferred a horse and a sabre in a squadron of hussars, but never mind; . . . the main thing is not to cause pain to his mamma."

It was said so prettily and at the same time with such feeling that Mme. Roger and the colonel were

affected and exchanged a softened look ; the Misses Lantz, too, with as much feeling as such little pastry articles were capable of, turned their three pairs of little black eyes upon Maurice, and their glances all at once became so tender that Amédée no longer doubted that all three of them were animated by one and the same feeling for his friend, whom he considered a very lucky fellow in only having to make his selection from these pretty table ornaments in sugar.

How he was loved, this courteous and charming Maurice, and how he knew how to inspire love !

And a little while after, when the champagne came on, when he rose with his glass in his hand and gave a mock toast, saluting each one of the guests with some good-natured allusion, how unrestrained was the mirth, what a cheerful laugh ran around the table ! The three young ladies laughed until they were as red as poppies, a kind of joyous cluck escaped from beneath the colonel's drooping mustache, Mme. Roger seemed to grow younger as she smiled, and, the Lord preserve us ! Amédée perceived the pretty waitress in a corner of the dining-room taking it all in at her ease, and a very appetizing morsel she was too, upon my word, when she showed her white teeth, like those of a young dog.

When tea had been served, the colonel, who had some distance to go to reach his home near the École Militaire, and, as the weather was clear, meant to return on foot and thus save cab-hire,

took his departure with his three marriageable plum-cakes, and Amédée also took his leave.

In the vestibule, however, as the waiting-maid was assisting Maurice to put on his overcoat, she suddenly said to him :

“ I hope that you won't be late in coming in to-night, Monsieur Maurice.”

“ What is that, Suzanne ? ” rejoined the young man, rather impatiently, but without anger. “ I shall come in at whatever hour I choose.”

And as he preceded Amédée down the stairs :

“ Upon my word ! ” said he, laughing, “ she will soon be showing her jealousy by making scenes in public.”

“ What ! ” exclaimed Amédée, glad that his companion could not see his blushes.

“ Well, yes. . . . Isn't she pretty ? . . . Oh ! I confess it, Violette, I have not, like you, the innocence of the flower whose name you bear. You may as well resign yourself to the fact, but you have a frightfully hard case for your friend. You may set your mind at rest on one point, however ; I am resolved that there shall be no further scandal beneath the family roof-tree. I have done with that huzzy, who, to tell the truth, commenced the engagement and kissed me behind the door before I ever kissed her. . . . I have other fish to fry now. . . . And since we are in the street and here is a cab—Hallo there, driver !—permit me to bid you good-night. It is only a quarter past ten, and I have plenty of time to put in an appearance at Bul-

lier and see Zoé Bonne-Affaire for a moment. See you to-morrow, Violette."

Amédée returned home much disturbed in mind. So his friend was a libertine. He had already found an excuse for him, however.

Had he not just beheld him behaving so charmingly toward his mother and treating those three young ladies with such respect? Maurice was allowing the ardor of youth to get a little the better of him, that was all. Was it for him, Amédée, pure as yet, no doubt, but not unassailed by the curiosity and the temptations of his age, was it for him to be severe? Would he not have done the same if he had dared, if he had sometimes had a few coins jingling in his pocket? Let us be just. . . . That night Amédée dreamed of the pretty soubrette with the incipient mustache.

The next day, when Amédée paid the Gérards his usual daily visit, the only subject of conversation was the entertainment of the previous evening. Amédée spoke of it with the eloquence of a young man who has seen finger-bowls used at dessert for the first time.

Louise, as she put on her hat and took her roll of music—she was giving piano lessons in some young ladies' schools now—was interested by Mme. Roger's mourning and her imposing beauty; mother Gérard thought that she would like to know how the *aspic de volaille* was made; the old engraver, very chauvinistic still, listened with delight to the colonel's military anecdotes; finally little Maria exacted

a minute description of the toilettes worn by the three Misses Lantz and gave a little disdainful pout.

"Come, Amédée," abruptly said the young girl, looking at herself in the fly-specked mirror of the combined studio and drawing-room, "tell me honestly . . . those young ladies . . . are they prettier than I am?"

There was a general laugh, but Amédée blushed without knowing why. Oh! no, indeed! the three demoiselles Lantz, with their skirts like Savoy cake and their corsages like nougat, did not begin to be as pretty as little Maria, so bright and fresh in her plain brown dress. How she was blooming out, and how pretty she was growing every day! It seemed to Amédée that he had never looked upon her until that minute. From whence had she received that rounded, willowy form, that wealth of bright hair that she twisted in a single great coil on the top of her small head, and that complexion of the dawning day, and that mouth and those eyes which smiled with the tender innocence of young flowers?

Mother Gérard, who, while laughing with the others, had scolded her daughter a little for her impulse of feminine vanity, now, in order to change the subject of conversation, brought up again the name of Maurice Roger.

Amédée could not find words adequate to sing the praises of his friend. He told how Maurice, out of affection for his mother, had quieted the seething

of the military blood that ran so hot in his veins. And then he was the personification of graceful courtesy. Though only eighteen years old, he did the honors of his table and his drawing-room with the manners of a great nobleman.

Maria listened attentively.

"You promised to bring him here," said the spoiled child, with an air of seriousness. "I would like to see him just once."

Amédée renewed his promise, but while on his way to the Lycée for afternoon recitation, he remembered the episode of the pretty servant girl and the manner in which Maurice had mentioned Zoé Bonne-Affaire's name, and his scruples made him ask himself if it would be right for him to introduce his friend to the demoiselles Gérard. This reflection at first troubled him not a little and induced a feeling of sadness, but he soon came to look upon it as ridiculous. Was not Maurice a well-bred young man and full of feeling? Had not his bearing toward Colonel Lantz's daughters shown how much reserve and tact he possessed?

A few days later, Maurice having reminded him of the proposed visit to the Gérards, Amédée presented him to his old friends.

Louise was not at home. For some time past she had been working assiduously in order to increase the resources of the family, for the engraver's eye-sight was failing him and he was obliged to change the number of his spectacles every year ;

consequently he could not accomplish as much as in the past.

The gentlemanly young fellow quite captivated the rest of the family, however, by his charming unaffectedness and the ease and cordiality of his manner. Respectful and unassuming toward Mme. Gérard, who stood a little in awe of him, he scarcely noticed Maria, and appeared entirely unconscious that he was an object of curiosity in her eyes. He modestly asked father Gérard's advice upon his project of taking up painting, examined the little ornaments of the drawing-room, and instinctively selected the best of the engravings from the others. The good man was hugely pleased with Maurice. Eagerly exhibiting his own particular collection, he forgot his pipe—it was Garibaldi that he was smoking now—and made his visitor a present of a proof from his last plate, which represented—the old republican must have been the victim of fatality!—which represented the Emperor Napoléon III. at Magenta, serenely sitting his horse in the centre of a square of grenadiers who were in process of being mowed down by the enemies' grape.

Maurice's visit was only a short one, and when Amédée, who had been giving many of his thoughts to little Maria during the last few days, asked his friend, as he accompanied him a bit of the distance on his way home: "Well, how did you like her?" Maurice simply replied: "She is delicious!" and changed the conversation.

VI

THERE is an important day drawing near for the two friends ; they are about to take their bachelor's degree:

Whenever M. Violette—he goes by the name of father Violette now at the ministry, so old and broken is he—whenever M. Violette has not taken too much “consolation” at the little café in the rue du Four and is less gloomy and silent than usual, he says to his son, after the soup has been removed :

“Do you know, Amédée, my mind will never be at rest until you have taken your bachelor's degree? They may say what they will, . . . that leads up to everything.”

Yes, indeed, to everything. There is a college friend of M. Violette's who received his degree amid a perfect shower of white balls, who, after having successively filled the positions of tutor, journalist,

curb-stone broker, pensioner of the state at Mazas prison, keeper of an intelligence office and superintendent of a gymnasium—he used to quote Homer when he awarded prizes—now stands in front of the Ambigu and opens carriage doors, and awaits his daily plate of soup at the door of the barracks with an old box of salt codfish in his hand.

M. Violette may rest easy. His son goes up for his degree on the same day as his friend Maurice and they are both honorably admitted. A little old man with a monkey face—the examiner in science—did indeed get Amédée a little tangled up on the subject of azote, but the candidate is admitted for all that. And now he can turn his hand to anything—to anything, do you understand?

But to what shall he turn his hand to begin with, when we come to think the matter over?—And M. Violette gives the subject much thought at such times as he has not yet made his daily visit in the rue du Four. To what can Amédée turn his hand, indeed?

To not such a great many things.

He might get a place in the offices of the ministry as auxiliary clerk, no doubt. A hundred and twenty-five francs a month and the annual gratuity. Well, well! That would not be so bad for a beginning.

But M. Violette remembers how everlastingly long are the years of office life, and the injury that he has done himself in guessing those famous riddles, the good ones of which still linger as traditions

among the older clerks. Is Amédée to waste his youth in deciphering rebuses? M. Violette, if it were possible, would prefer for his son a more independent career, where he might have a chance to show what he is made of. How would trade answer, for instance? Yes, there is a great future in trade! In proof of this proposition, there is the grocer over the way, a simple fellow who probably did not sand his sugar enough, and who hung himself recently in his back-shop rather than make an assignment. M. Violette would be glad to see his son in trade. Suppose he were to get a place with M. Gaufre? Why not? The young man might in time receive an interest in the business and make his fortune. M. Violette mentions it to Amédée.

“Suppose we go and see your uncle Isidore next Sunday morning?”

The idea of selling chasubles and roads of the cross does not seem to have any great charm for Amédée, who keeps concealed at the bottom of his bureau drawer a little copy-book filled with sonnets, and who is at present revolving in his head the plot of a romantic drama in which the actors are to say: “Pâques-Dieu!” and “Messeigneurs.” He wants to do all he can to please his father, however. He is so happy to perceive that M. Violette has been showing more interest in him for some time past and seems to be trying to resist his fatal habit. So the young man yields, and at noon on the succeeding Sunday presents himself at the house in the rue Servandoni in company with his father.

The "Bondieusard" receives them good-naturedly. He has just come in from hearing mass and taken his place at table. He invites them to follow his example and taste his stewed kidneys, one of the triumphs of his Berenice, who serves breakfast with fingers covered with rings.

But the Violettes have breakfasted; and the clerk proceeds to make known his wish.

"Yes," says uncle Isidore, "Amédée might come in here. Only you know, Violette, his education would all have to be begun over again—he would have to begin at the beginning, you know. . . . Oh! the boy would be treated well enough! He could take his meals with me, couldn't he, Berenice? But to begin with, he would have to work hard, just as I did when I came here from my province, he would have to do the work of the shop, tie up parcels . . ."

M. Violette looks at his son and perceives that he is flushing for shame. The poor man sees that he has made a mistake. What did it amount to that his boy had dazzled M. Patin in the midst of the Sorbonne by reciting three verses of Aristophanes without a stumble if he is to be nothing but a common day-laborer and a packer of parcels? Come, come! Amédée shall yawn before the green pasteboard boxes and dig out the rebuses in the *Illustration*. Thus is it fated! And so they say good-day to uncle Isidore.

"We will think it over, Monsieur Gaufre, and will come and see you again."



THE BUREAUCRATE.

But scarcely has Berenice shut the door behind them :

“It is very clear that there is nothing to be expected from that old egotist,” M. Violette says to his son, “and to-morrow we will go and see the head clerk of my division, M. Courtet, to whom I have mentioned your name in case of any eventuality.”

He is a pretty decent kind of fellow, this head clerk. Rather too starchy, to be sure, too conceited ; his red rosette, as large as a forty sous piece, fairly dazzles the eyes, and it is really imprudent to remain so long with his legs spread out and his back to the fire, for he will certainly scorch the seat of his trousers. But never mind that ! His entrails of compassion are not wanting. He has noticed the pitiful decadence of father Violette, “a poor devil who will never reach the age that will entitle him to a retiring pension.” M. Courtet, as distributor of the little round bits of leather, will keep one of them for Amédée. In a week the young man will be appointed an auxiliary clerk at a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year. It is promised, it is done.

Phew ! How stifling was the heat of the stove ! How the mouldy papers stank ! And yet, Amédée had no reason to complain. He might have been assigned to the task of footing up columns of figures for five hours on end, but he owes it to M. Courtet's kindness that he was set to work at once on the correspondence. He perfects himself in his formu-

las, therefore, and quickly becomes very expert in the amenities of official intercourse. He is perfectly well acquainted now with the shade of difference that exists between "Distinguished consideration," and "The most distinguished consideration," and he has sounded the depths of the gulf that lies between a simple "Assurance" and a "Homage." In a word, Amédée is bored, but is not unhappy, for he has time for his reveries.

In the morning he takes the longest road to reach his office, trying meanwhile to make "*jour*" rhyme with "*amour*" without at the same time bringing another platitude into the world, or perhaps his thoughts revert to his grand romantic drama and to the great love scene in the third act that is to take place beneath the gibbet of Montfaucon. In the evening he visits the Gérards, whom he finds collected about the lamp in the dining-room, the father reading his paper and the three women busy with their sewing, and he chats idly with Maria, who replies to his remarks for the most part without taking her eyes from her work, perhaps because she has an idea, the little coquette, that Amédée admires her beautiful lashes as they lie upon her cheek.

It was in her honor, indeed, that Amédée constructed his first sonnets, and he adores her, be it understood.

But he is also in love with the Misses Lantz, whom he meets occasionally at Mme. Roger's, and who, the other Sunday evening, all three of them,

had a rose in their hair, so that they reminded one of those pastry pantheons that the confectioners display in their windows on the day of some great fête. If Amédée were to be presented to the eleven thousand virgins, one after the other, they would inspire him with eleven thousand passions. Then there is the maid of the family on the second floor, whose sidewise glance disquiets him as often as he meets her on the stairs, and his heart sinks away down into his boots whenever he turns the door-handle of a shop in the rue Bonaparte, where the blond and insidious shop-girl of his acquaintance still obliges him always to select blood-red gloves, although he detests them. You must remember that Amédée is very young ; he is in love with love.

He is extremely bashful, moreover, and has never had the audacity to tell the pretty glove-seller that he would prefer gloves of greenish-bronze color, nor does he venture to show Maria Gérard the sonnets that he continues to indite to her, and in which he now puts "*amours*" in the plural so as to make it rhyme with "*toujours*," which is quite an improvement. He has never dared to reply to the alluring side-glance of the little waitress on the second floor, and he is wrong in being so ceremonious, for as he passed the butcher's one morning, he saw the shop-boy put his arm around the little girl's waist as he tickled her with some joke about the sirloin that she was buying.

In the interval between leaving his office and



MLLE. IRMA MAKING HERSELF AT HOME.

dinner-time, Amédée sometimes pays his friend Maurice a visit, who has obtained Mme. Roger's permission—oh! maternal weakness!—to set up a bachelor establishment in the Latin Quarter, “so that he may be nearer to the law-school.”

Amédée finds the dandified Maurice surrounded by a cloud of tobacco smoke, in a scarlet jacket and stretched at length on a great divan, in a little low-ceiled *entresol* of the rue Monsieur-le-Prince. As he enters the room, Amédée inhales a heady odor of luxury and voluptuous pleasure. The carpets are thick and soft, handsomely bound books of poetry rest upon the shelves of a credence table, there is a piano that is never closed. A heavy odor of fine perfumery mingles with the smell of the cigarettes, and on the velvet-covered mantel-piece Mademoiselle Irma, the reigning favorite of the master of the premises, has left the last new novel, marking the place where she left off reading with a hair-pin.

Amédée passes a delightful hour there. Maurice, as usual, receives him with cheerful kindness, in which a shade of patronage is just barely perceptible. He walks about the room, his fine form well set off by his close-fitting red jacket, lighting cigarettes and throwing them away, seats himself for two minutes at the piano and plays some tearful thing of Chopin's, opens a book and recites from it some choice selection, shows his albums to his friend, makes him repeat some of his sonnets and praises them, flutters about everything, in a word, without

ever coming to a rest, and Amédée is more and more captivated by this light dilettantish grace.

But Amédée can no longer enjoy his friend by himself ; he hardly ever finds him alone. Maurice's companions keep coming in constantly—the door is never fastened—young men of pleasure like himself, but less refined, without his gentlemanly manners and bearing ; they come to discuss some projected pleasure party, or remind him of some engagement for the evening. Frequently one of them, with his hat on his head, will drum out a polka, having first placed his lighted cigar on the edge of the piano. These rakish fellows frighten Amédée a little, for he is so unfortunate as to be nice in his tastes.

When the visitors are all gone, Maurice wishes his friend to stay for dinner, but the door opens again and Mlle. Irma, shivering beneath her furs and with lowered veil—a jolly little muzzle she has though, all the same—enters briskly, runs to Maurice and puts her arms about his neck and kisses him, rumpling his hair meanwhile with her gloved hands.

“ Bravo ! We will dine together, the three of us,” says Maurice.

But Amédée is a little afraid of Mlle. Irma, who has thrown her muff upon the divan and covered the head of the Venus of Milo on the mantel-piece with her sealskin cap. The young man makes his excuses ; he says he is expected at home.

“ Be off with you, then, wild man of the woods ! ”

says Maurice, laughing, as he sees him to the door.

Thereupon come reveries, desires ! His experience of life does not extend beyond these, poor Amédée Violette. He is very sad at times ; for it pains him to see his father abandoning himself more and more to his vice ; for he is not beloved of any woman, and never does he have in his trousers' pocket a twenty franc piece, a louis, to give him a little pleasure and freedom. But he is not so greatly to be pitied after all ! His life is pure and noble ; he smiles gladly when he reflects that he has some good friends, his heart beats wildly at the mere thought of a woman, he weeps sympathetic tears whenever he reads fine poetry ; he looks at life through an atmosphere of ideality and hope, and it appears transfigured to his eyes. Happy Amédée ! He is not twenty yet !

VII

ONE dark, foggy winter's morning, Amédée was lying in bed later than usual when his father entered his room and handed him a letter that the woman-of-all-work had just brought up from the concierge's box. It was from Maurice, inviting his friend to dine with him at Foyot's that evening at seven o'clock to meet some of their old school-mates of the Lycée Henri IV.

"You will excuse me if I do not dine with you this evening, papa," said Amédée with delight. "Maurice Roger is going to give us a spread at the restaurant."

The young man's buoyant spirits quickly fell, however, when he looked at his father, who had seated himself on the edge of the bed. He was become an object almost frightful to behold, this man who had grown old before his time, with his livid

complexion, his blood-shot eyes, his lock of hair of a dirty gray falling over his right temple, and nothing could be more pitiful than his senile gesture, as he laid his lean, trembling hands flat upon his knees. Amédée, who knew, alas ! how it was that his father had reached this state, felt his heart stirred with pity and with shame.

"Are you not feeling well to-day?" asked the young man. "Would you rather that we should dine together, just as we do every day? I will drop a line to Maurice; it is soon done."

"No, my child, no," replied M. Violette in a mournful voice. "Go and have a little pleasure with your friends. I am well aware that the life that you lead here with me is only too monotonous. Go and have a good time. I shall be glad to have you do so. . . . Only I have an idea that has been worrying me for some time, and this morning more than usual . . . and I wish to tell you of it."

"What is it, dear papa?"

"Amédée, your mother died fifteen years ago last March. You were scarcely old enough to know her. . . . She was the best and sweetest of human beings, and my dearest wish for you, my child, is that you may meet with a woman like her and make her your life companion and, happier than I, keep her at your side always. In these fifteen years that your mother has not been with us, I have suffered, I have suffered terribly, I tell you, and never, never have I known a momentary consolation. If I have lived, if, in spite of all, I have summoned up strength

to live, it was only for your sake and in remembrance of her. I have very nearly succeeded in doing my duty. You are now nearly a man ; you are honest and intelligent and you have an occupation that affords you your daily bread. Still I often ask myself . . . Oh ! how often, how often, . . . if I have well and truly fulfilled all my obligations toward you. No, no ! no protestations ! ” said the unhappy man, whom Amédée had lovingly taken in his arms. “ No, my poor child, I have not sufficiently loved you. I allowed my grief to occupy too large a space within my heart. In these later years especially, my life has been too much separated from thine, I have too seldom called upon thy young arm to stay my weakness, . . . I have too often taken refuge in solitude. Thou canst understand me, Amédée,” he exclaimed amid his sobs, “ I cannot speak further on the subject. There are moments of my life of which you must know nothing, and if you have the pain of knowing where I am and what I do during those moments, you must never allow yourself to think of it, you must forget it. I beseech you, my child, do not judge me severely, and one of these days, when I am gone, . . . ah ! yes, you must look for that ; the burthen of my grief is too heavy for me, I cannot bear it much longer, . . . yes, when I am dead and gone, promise me, my son, that you will be kind to my memory, and that whenever you think of your father, you will only say to yourself : ‘ He suffered much ! ’ ”

Amédée was weeping hot tears upon his father's shoulder, who gently stroked his son's beautiful hair with his trembling hands.

"My, father, my dear, good father," said Amédée, sobbing, "I love you and respect you with all my heart. I will dress myself right away and go with you to the ministry; and we will come home together and have dinner like two good friends. Let me not part from you to-day, I beg you."

But M. Violette had suddenly risen like one forming a resolution.

"No, Amédée," he said with decision, "I have said to you all that I had to say, and you will treasure my words in your heart. . . . It is sufficient. Go and enjoy yourself this evening with your friends. There is danger in excessive melancholy at your age. I, for my part, will go and take dinner with father Bastide, who has just secured his retiring pension and has invited me many a time to come and see his little house at the Grand-Montrouge. That is settled. . . . I insist on it, understand. . . . Come, dry your eyes, and give me a kiss."

And after having once again clasped his son to his heart in a long and loving embrace, M. Violette left the room. Presently Amédée heard him go to the vestibule, take his hat and cane, open and close the door and descend the stairs with heavy step.

A quarter of an hour later, as the young man was crossing the Luxembourg gardens on his way, he also, to the office, he encountered Louise Gérard, carrying her roll of music and bending her step to-



BEFORE THE SUICIDE.

ward the city and the houses where she was giving lessons. He walked beside her for a little way, and the kind-hearted girl at once remarked the redness of his eyes and the agitation of his face.

"What ails you, Amédée?" she anxiously inquired.

"Louise," he replied, "do you not think that my father is greatly changed within the last few months?"

She stopped and gazed upon him silently for a moment with eyes that were moist with pity.

"He is indeed greatly changed, my poor Amédée. You would not believe me were I to tell you that I have not remarked it. . . . Whatever may be the cause, however, which has . . . how shall I express myself? . . . which has operated to effect this change in your father's health, you must remember only one thing, my friend: that he has shown great love for you and great abnegation for your sake, that he remained a widower, though still a young man, and did not marry again, and, that he might devote himself wholly to his only child, he has endured long years of solitude and bitter memories. You must remember that, Amédée, and that only."

"I am never forgetful of it, my dear Louise; do not think that I am; and my heart is full of gratitude toward him. Only this morning he was so kind and affectionate to me. . . . But his health is ruined; he is an old man now, and his strength has quite abandoned him. Soon . . . I feel it not as a

fear, but as a certainty . . . very soon he will be entirely incapable to work. . . . I still seem to see his hands, how they trembled, . . . and he is not entitled to a retiring pension. If he could no longer perform his daily task at the ministry, he would with difficulty obtain some slight assistance, and that, even, would be granted him as a favor, while for long years yet I can only look forward to a very slender salary for my own part. Oh ! the thought that the catastrophe is so near, that he may be taken sick at any moment, perhaps become entirely helpless, and that we shall be but little more than paupers, that I shall be able to do nothing to comfort his old age. . . . It is that which causes me to shudder."

They were walking side by side on the soft, moist earth of the great garden, among the leafless trees, and a mist, light, but sharp and penetrating, made them shiver beneath their wraps.

"Amédée," said Louise, looking at the young man with gentle seriousness, "I am older than you and knew you when you were but a little boy. Twenty-two years have rolled over my head, and they make me almost an old maid and confer upon me the right of giving you a little scolding. You lack confidence in life, my friend, and at your age that is not as it should be. Come ! we all of us have our cares. Do you think that I do not observe that my father also is aging fast, that his eyes are beginning to fail and that we are much more straitened at home than we used to be ? Are we any

the more sad for that? Mamma does not cook so many nice little dishes and I have to run about the streets of Paris to earn my fees, that is all there is about it. We live pretty nearly in the same way as before, however, and our dear Maria, . . . she is only a pretty child for us all and she is the joy and delight of the house, . . . well, our Maria has everything just the same, a new dress now and then, or a pretty hat. My experience does not amount to much, but it seems to me that to be truly unhappy, it would first of all be necessary that there should be no one for me to love; that is the only privation that is worthy of causing us a single instant's worry. Do you know that I recently experienced one of the greatest joys of my life? I had noticed that papa was smoking less than usual with the object of economizing a little, poor man! Luckily, however, I secured a new pupil at the Batignolles, and as soon as I had my first month's money in my pocket I bought a great package of tobacco and brought it home and laid it down on the plate he was engraving. . . . We should never complain so long as those whom we love are with us to make us happy. I know the secret grief that distresses you on your father's account; but remember how much he has suffered, think how he loves you, and that you are his true, his only consolation. . . . And when your black fits are on you, come to your old friends, Amédée; they will try to rekindle the fire of your heart at the hearth-stone of their friendship and to communicate to you some

of their courage, the courage of the poor, which consists of a little unconcern for the morrow and a great deal of resignation."

They had reached the Florentine terrace where stand the marble statues of the queens and ladies of the court, and beyond the balustrade with its great ornamental vases they could discern dimly through the mist the melancholy lake with its pair of swans, the well-sanded alleys stretching away in solitude, the pale green lawns, undecked with flowers and surrounded by the skeletons of lilac-bushes, and the front of the old palace where the hands of the clock were pointing to ten.

"We must hurry," said Louise, glancing at the time-piece; "take me to the omnibus at the Odéon; I am a little behind time."

He looked at her as he walked at her side. Alas! no, she was not beautiful, poor Louise was not, notwithstanding her great eyes that had in them such depths of affection, neither was she alluring. A mean little close bonnet, a mantle wrapped tightly about her shoulders, gloves that had been to the cleaner and large easy shoes; yes, she was indeed, and looked it, a teacher of music at two francs an hour; but what a kind, brave girl she was! What feeling she had shown in speaking of his family! It was to pay for tobacco for her father and for the new dress for her pretty sister, whose name she uttered accompanied by a motherly smile, that she had left her home thus early in the fog and was now about to pass her day in riding in the public

conveyances and tramping about the muddy streets of Paris. Her appearance, even still more than the words that she had lately spoken, inspired Amédée's



weak and faltering heart with the desire and energy of manly effort.

"My dear Louise," he feelingly said, "I am indeed happy in having a friend like you. . . . And

what a long, long, time ! . . . Do you remember when we were children and used to hunt the old bear-skin cap ? ”

They had left the garden and had reached the rear of the Odéon. The two omnibus horses that were standing there, a couple of Percherons of a yellowish white, already worn down by hard work so that one could count their ribs, were touching noses and rubbing them together as if caressing each other ; finally the off horse raised his heavy head and laid it sociably upon the mane of its mate. Louise pointed with her finger to the touching attitude of the two poor animals.

“ Their destiny,” she said with a smile, “ is a very hard one, is it not ? And yet, even they are faithful companions, and that suffices to enable them to endure their fate.”

And giving Amédée a parting clasp of the hand, she climbed nimbly to her seat in the vehicle.

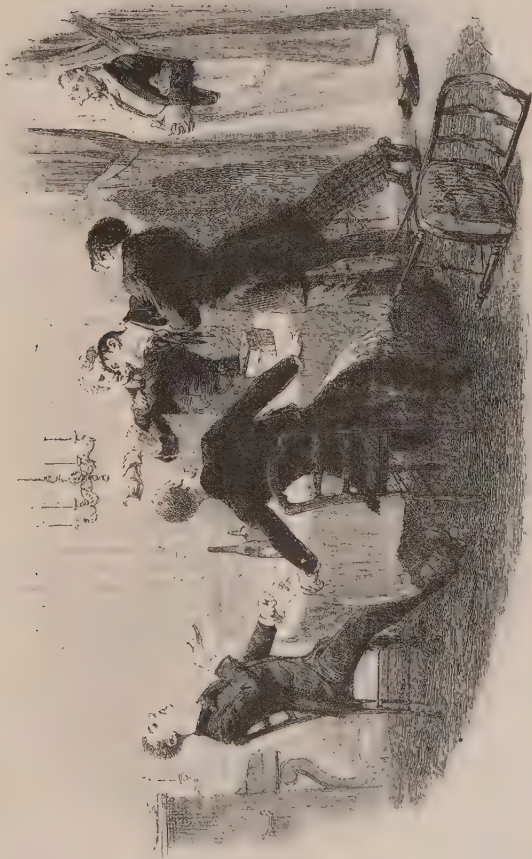
All day long Amédée in his office was very anxious about his father, and along about four o'clock, a little before the time for closing, he took his way to M. Violette's office. He was informed, however, that the clerk had just left, saying that he was going to dine with an old friend at the Grand-Montrouge, and Amédée, somewhat reassured, made up his mind to go and meet his friend Maurice at the restaurant Foyot.

VIII

AMÉDÉE was the first to arrive at the rendez-vous ; he had hardly enunciated Maurice Roger's name when a voice of brass at the top of a winding stair-way bellowed out : " Show him into the yellow parlor," and a waiter with a chin-whisker like a Yankee, spry and alert as a juggler, conducted him to an apartment where was spread a table dazzling with silver and crystal. This untiringly active person forthwith whipped off Amédée's hat and overcoat and left him alone with the blazing candles in the brightly illuminated room.

Evidently it was to be a feast. A great pyramid of craw-fish flashed and flamed in the middle of the table, and each plate—there were five all told—was flanked by its platoon of glasses, great and small.

Maurice made his appearance almost at the same instant, accompanied by the other guests, three young men got up in the latest style, in whom Amé-



"DRUNK AS POLAND."

dée at first almost failed to recognize the youngsters with sprouting beards, dirty tunics and blue yarn stockings down at heel who had formerly been his contemporaries in wearing out the seats of their red-striped trousers on the benches of the Lycée Henri IV. After a few hand-shakings, however, and some of the customary greetings :—"Oh! Is



that you?" and "Don't you remember me?" every one renewed his acquaintance with every one else.

What! Can this little broad-backed man with tip-tilted nose, so pleased with his own person and making every inch of his stature tell, can this be Gorju, the boy who wanted to be an actor? But he is an actor now, or nearly so, since he is taking lessons from Regnier at the Conservatory. Already

an incipient Roscius from head to foot, he makes no attempt to conceal his vanity, and within the three minutes that he has been in the room he has visited the mirror ten times to admire his pug nose and his prominent features, which seem as if they were made expressly to be visible from a distance, and the broad cheeks that have become blue



beneath much scraping of the razor. He makes it his first business to inform Amédée that he has renounced the name of Gorju, which would be unsuitable for the stage, and has assumed the pseudonym of Jocquelet. Then, without the loss of an instant, he goes on to tell of his "methods," his "charm," and his "physique."

And this tall, good-looking young fellow with

such innocent side-whiskers, whose regular features look as if they had been carved out of soap and who has just placed his thick lawyer's portfolio on the sofa? Why, that is Arthur Papillon, who was awarded the Latin oration, the man who wanted to get up a debating club at the Lycée and divide the rhetoric class into groups and sub-



groups like a parliament. "What are you doing, Papillon?" Papillon is pursuing his law studies, and quite naturally is secretary to the *Conférence Patru*.

Amédée has no difficulty in recognizing the third guest. "Hallo! Gustave!"—he joyously exclaims. Yes, it is Gustave, the old-time dunce of the school, of whom they used to say that he

was born with a silver spoon in his mouth because his father had amassed an immense fortune in guano. There is no change in Gustave ! The same sunken eyes still, the same verdigris complexion. But what style the fellow puts on ! Quite English, from the tips of his little pointed shoes to the horse-shoe pin in his scarf. He looks like a jockey dressed in his Sunday clothes.

That droll chap, Gustave ! And what may he be driving at now ? Why, nothing. Has not his father an income of two hundred thousand francs, the result of dabbling in albatross dung ? Gustave is studying life, that is all ; by which he means getting up every day about noon with the bad taste of last night's supper in his mouth and lingering every night at the bacarat table of the Club *des Gâteaux* until daylight comes and catches him there, after five hours by the clock spent in calling out "bac !" in a feeble, mournful voice. Gustave is studying life, I say ; which pursuit, looking at his death's head appearance, may result one of these days in his acquiring a knowledge of quite a different character. But who ever thinks of death in these days ? Gustave wants to learn what life is, do you see ? and when a great fit of coughing interrupts him in one of his noisy, idiotic laughs, his boon companions at the Club *des Gâteaux* slap him on the back and tell him that he has swallowed something cross-ways.

Satan of a Gustave, get thee behind me !

But the wizard-like waiter brings in the soup,

and he takes off the cover of the tureen with a manner so like Robert Houdin's that every one is surprised not to see a bunch of roses or a live rabbit come forth from the receptacle. But no, it is nothing but a plain *croûte-au-pot*, and the guests go to work on it vigorously and in silence. After the Rhine wine, however, their tongues become loosened, and when the *sole Normande* has been disposed of—what glorious appetites we have when we are twenty!—the young men are all talking at once.

What a racket! Words and sentences crackle like a musketry fire. Gustave, raising his cracked voice, is boasting of the performance of a “stepper” that he has been trying that morning in the *allée des cavaliers*—between ourselves, he would have done better to stay in bed and take a little cod-liver oil. Maurice is shouting to the waiter to uncork the Château-Léoville. Amédée, having mentioned his drama to the future actor, Gorju, otherwise known as Jocquelet, with his trumpet voice proceeding from his trumpet-like nose, at once sets himself up as a man of experience, gives his advice and quotes admiringly Talma's famous aphorism to a dramatic poet: “Above all, let there be no fine poetry!” And Arthur Papillon, who means to be a public speaker and finds this an excellent occasion to try his powers in overriding the tumult of an assembled multitude, is bellowing forth, for his own edification, an eulogy upon a speech of Jules Favre that he listened to yesterday in the *Corps Législatif*.

In this pell-mell kind of conversation, our timid Amédée has no chance from the beginning ; Maurice, also, soon takes refuge in silence, with the suspicion of a smile of disdain beneath his yellow mustache, while Gustave has to yield to a fit of coughing and retire from the combat. Like two ships of the line replying to each other's broadsides, the lawyer and the actor alone continue to bombard each other with words. Arthur Papillon, who belongs to the liberal opposition and wishes the imperial government to return to the "regular and peaceful working of parliamentary institutions," has the upper hand for the moment and is expatiating in his most ringing voice on the last article in the *Courrier du Dimanche*; but letting loose his terrible organ, in which the clamor of all the horns of Gideon seems to be concentrated, the actor resumes the offensive, and in his moment of unquestioned victory, gives vent to unbounded nonsense ; intimates that the character of Alcestis is adapted to the comic stage, throws cold water on Shakespeare and Hugo, eulogizes Scribe and the "fleshly school," and, in spite of his countenance like a gargoyle of the middle ages which will assure him in the future an entire share in the Association of the Théâtre Français in comic rôles, he declares that he was born to play young lover's parts and pledges himself to make the rôle of Nero in *Britannicus* a "sympathetic" one.

All this would be dreadfully stupid, were it not for the appearance on the scene of the truffled

partridges, which the prestidigitator carves and hands around in less time than it would take him to shuffle a pack of cards "all perfectly straight." He even serves Amédée with the most undesirable portion, just as he might oblige him to draw the nine of clubs from the pack. Then he fills the glasses with Chambertin; again there are bees in all the bonnets, and the conversation, as was inevitable, turns upon women.

It was Jocquelet who began it by mentioning the name of one of the prettiest actresses of Paris. He knows them all, describes them physically as if they were in the habit of posing for him, gives the list of their lovers, enumerates their points like a slave-dealer.

"So, little Lucie Prunelle, who is on with the great Moncontour . . ."

"Pardon me," interrupts Gustave (Good Heavens! how bad he looks!), "pardon me, she has already left him for Cerfbeer the banker."

"But I say no."

"But I say yes."

There would have been a quarrel almost, had not Maurice pulled the dogs apart by rallying handsome Arthur Papillon upon his love affairs in his sly, pleasant manner.

For the young lawyer drinks many a cup of Orleanist tea, frequents the same salons as Beulé and Prévost-Paradol, escorts political women to the receptions of the Académie Française.

"There is where you lay waste the land, you rascal!"

But Papillon stands on his defence, with a smile full of conceit and double meaning. As he looks at it—here he puts his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat—the man of ambition should be chaste.

"*Abstineo Venere*," he says, comically casting down his eyes, for he is not the man to quail before a Latin quotation. He declares, moreover, that he is hard to suit in such matters. His dreams are of an Egeria, a superior intelligence. But he says nothing of the little milliner that he tried to enter into conversation with yesterday in the rue Soufflot as he was coming from the law-school, and who sized him up from top to toe and then threatened to call the police.

In reply to another of Maurice's pleasantries, the lawyer formulates his amorous programme in these terms :

"See here, . . . unless a woman has Hypatia's intelligence, Heloise's sensibility, Joconda's smile, Antiope's legs and the bust of the Venus de Medici . . . I could never love her."

Without going to such extreme lengths, the actor also shows a very exacting spirit, notably in a plastic point of view. According to him, Déborah, the tragedienne of the Odéon—a perfect Greek statue!—has too large hands, and charming Blanche Pompon, who inflames the occupants of the boxes at the Variétés, is nothing more than a wax doll.

But it is Gustave who is the intractable one above all the rest. Excited by the Burgundy—half a

wine-glass of a mild aperient at morning, taken in hot milk, that is what would suit him best !—he declares that the most beautiful creature in the world, after all, is only pleasing for a night. That is a settled rule with him, a matter of principle. He has never, so he says, made but a single exception to this regulation, and that was in favor of the famous *danseuse* of the *Casino-Cadet*, Nini l'Auvergnate, because she is so amusing at supper-time. . . . Ah, so funny, boys ! she would make you die laughing !

Die ! Yes, my dear Monsieur Gustave, that is exactly what will happen to you one of these fine mornings, if you are not more sensible in your way of living—and even at that you will have to go to the south to pass your winters.

Our innocent Amédée is on tenter-hooks. All his illusions—a mingling of desire and sentiment—have been cruelly wounded. A deplorable faculty has also just been revealed to him, a fresh cause for unhappiness : the spectacle of such folly distresses him. How brutal and devoid of truth these young men are ! Gustave in his eyes is simply an idiot, Arthur Papillon a pedant, and as to Jocquet, he thinks him as unendurable as a great blue-bottle fly, buzzing between the casement and the curtain in the bedroom of a nervous man. Fortunately Maurice is there to make a diversion of the talk, which he does with an outburst of boyish laughter.

“ Well, my friends,” he exclaims, “ you are a set

of ninnies, the whole of you, by the god Priapus, and I am glad that I am not like you! I do not defile my own nest. Hurrah for woman and hurrah for women! Yes, all of them! The pretty ones, . . . and the others! For it is the truth, there are none of them ugly, I swear it by the sex! I do not care to notice that this pretty miss has feet like an Englishwoman, and if the complexion of that tavern bar-maid has been gilded by the sun, I overlook it, provided her breasts are firm enough to wear away the linen of her chemise. Cease your inane talk, then, and do as I do. Take a bite of the apple while your teeth are good. . . . *Gaudemus igitur*. . . . Can you tell the reason why, while I am paying attentions to the mistress, I am not disregarding of the maid who brings in a letter on a salver? And why, as I am leaving Cydalise, who has put a rose in my button-hole, I turn in the passage for a look at Margoton, who is just coming in from market with her basket on her arm? Because they are *others* of the sex, my boys! There is the supreme reason. The rest of them. . . . Yes, . . . the "thousand and three." . . . Don Juan is right. I feel the hot blood coursing through my veins, and the waiter is going to give us some champagne, isn't he? . . . so that we may all drink to Love."

Maurice is a cynic, but none the less this outburst of youth is not without its effect. Every one applauds him. The prestidigitator in white apron, who moves about the table with the agility

of an inhabitant of the Palace of Monkeys, uncorks a bottle of Roederer—it is surprising that it does not emit a rocket or a roman-candle!—and good humor is restored.

It continues, uninterruptedly and noisily, until the end of the feast, which is spoiled at last by that idiot of a Gustave. He has insisted on taking three glasses of kummel—why was he not given soothing-syrup instead?—and imagining that Jocquelet has looked black at him, he all at once formally declares his intention of braining the offender with the water-bottle. The actor, all the color gone from his face, endeavors to bring to mind all the quarrels that he has witnessed on the stage; he draws himself up in his chair, inflates his chest, stammers: “At your service!” tries to “play up to the situation.” It is all labor lost, though. Maurice and Amédée lay hold of Gustave, who is indisputably as drunk as Poland; to the objurgations of his friends he replies only by a torrent of tears, and finally lets his head fall upon the table, smashing some of the crockery thereby.

“Come! The baby must be taken home,” says Maurice with a signal to the waiter.

This way, Robert Houdin! In the twinkling of an eye, the human rag known under the name of Gustave is taken from his chair, has his hat and overcoat put on for him, is placed on his feet and dusted off, escorted down the winding stair-case and bundled into a cab. Then the juggler reappears and performs his last trick by rendering

invisible the plate into which Maurice had thrown a few louis in payment of the bill.

It is late, not far from eleven o'clock, and the friends shake hands and say good-night in the



midst of a dense fog that smells of soot and in which the gas-jets look like the paper lanterns over the stands where old women sell oranges. Brrr ! How the dampness penetrates !

“Adieu !”

“Au revoir.”

“Remember me to those ladies !”

Arthur Papillon, who is in evening dress (he always appears at dinner in swallow-tail and white tie), has yet time to show himself in a political salon on the left bank of the river and catch a glimpse of Moichod, the Genevese historian, the author of that famous history of Napoléon, in which it is demonstrated that Bonaparte was only a second-rate general and that all his battles were won by his lieutenants. Jocquelet, for his part, means to go to the Odéon and listen for the tenth time to the fifth act of a very successful play of the sensible school, in which the hero, after railing against money through four acts of badly rhymed verse, in the *dénouement* marries the young girl who has the millions, to the great satisfaction of the bourgeois. As to Maurice, he accompanies Amédée a little way on his homeward road before turning his steps in the direction of the rue Monsieur-le-Prince to rejoin Mlle. Irma, who has probably taken the key from under the door-mat by this time and is now engaged in putting up her hair in paper.

“Rather stupid, those friends of ours, are they not ?” he says to his companion.

“I confess that I was almost disgusted with them,” the young man replies. “Their brutality in speaking of love and women as they did pained me. And yourself, Maurice—the more is the pity, I am going to be frank with you—even you, with

your proud and delicately organized personality ; let me indulge myself with the belief that you were not speaking the truth, that it was only to gratify them that you uttered your eulogy of vice. No ! the mere satisfaction of an appetite, the yielding yourself to a momentary passion cannot suffice to make you happy. . . . You must feel the stings of conscience, it is impossible that you have no higher ideals."

But Maurice brusquely interrupts him in his tirade, laughing in anticipation of the fancy he is about to express in words.

"My conscience ! . . . Oh, you tender, innocent Violette, oh ! you modest woodland flower ! Why, my poor friend, our conscience is like a glove of undressed kid, people wear them dirty. Adieu. We will have another talk about these matters sometime when Irma is not waiting for me."

Amédée makes his way alone back to the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, shivering in the cold fog, his heart filled with a feeling of melancholy and vague uneasiness.

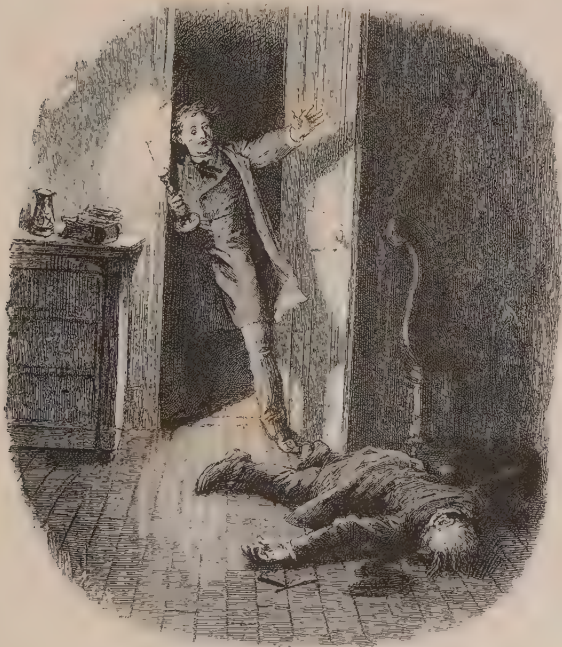
No ! It cannot be true. There is a love different from that of the brutes, there are women different from the daughters of pleasure. And then he thinks of little Maria, the companion of his childhood's days, and he beholds her among her family, sitting by the lamp with her embroidery and conversing with him with downcast eyes while he admires her beautiful lashes as they shade her cheek, and as he reflects upon it, he is suddenly

astonished to recollect that in the presence of that dear child he has never felt an unworthy emotion, he has never desired any other happiness than that of being always at her side. Why should not a feeling like his own spring up some day in Maria's heart? Have they not grown up together from childhood, is he not the only young man that she has any close relations of friendship with? How sweet it would be to become affianced to her! With charming scrupulosity, the poor child reproaches himself with what impure thoughts have at times assailed him. Yes! it is thus that one should love. Henceforth he will shun temptation of every kind; he will follow the advice that good Louise gave him and spend all his evenings with the Gérards; he will try to tighten the bonds between himself and his dear little Maria, content, meanwhile, to listen to her speech and gaze upon her smile, and he will await in chastity, with a heart overflowing with tenderness for her, the moment when she shall at last perceive that he loves her and shall consent to become his wife. Oh! how exquisite is the union of two virgin hearts, the adorable kiss of two pairs of innocent lips! Can it be possible that there is such happiness in life?

This beautiful dream has given new warmth to the young man's heart. When he reaches his house he is in a joyful frame of mind; he gives a strong pull at the bell, springs lightly up the stairs and opens the door of his apartment. But what is this? His father must have been late in coming home;

there is a thread of light shining from beneath the door of his bedroom.

“Poor man !” says Amédée to himself as he re-



calls the scene of the morning. “Can he be ill ?
Let us see at once.”

He has no more than opened the door, however,
when he recoils with a cry of horror and distress.
By the light of the candle that is burning on the

mantel-piece Amédée has beheld his father stretched at full length upon the floor, his shirt open at the neck and stained with blood, still holding in his right hand, clenched in the agony of death, the razor that he had used to cut his throat.

Yes ! It occurs sometimes, the perfect union of two poor mortals in the bonds of love, and it is happiness upon earth ; but if one of the two dies, the other never is consoled.

M. Violette never was consoled.

IX

THERE is not one left of those who were near to Amédée.

On the day succeeding his father's death, he even brought to a violent end his relations with M. Isidore Gaufre, his sole surviving relative. The old hypocrite, under the pretence that suicide inspired him with horror, allowed the husband of his niece to be borne to the cemetery in a hearse such as is used for paupers, and did not honor with his presence a ceremony which the Church discountenances; but this did not interfere with the holy man's gorging himself at breakfast that very same day—thundering the while against the progress of materialism—with tripe *à la mode de Caën*, one of Berenice's master-pieces which she produced once a week.

So Amédée no longer has any family and his friends are scattered.

As a reward for passing his two examinations in

law, which Maurice did as if it had been child's play for him, Mme. Roger has decided to treat her son to a trip to Italy, and the two of them have gone away together.

And those poor Gérards, ah ! how they are to be pitied ! Exactly one month after M. Violette's death, the old engraver fell dead upon the plate on which he was working, stricken by a sudden attack of apoplexy, and that day there were not fifty francs in the house. Around the grave into which they lowered the obscure and honest artist, fittingly clothed in pine, there were only the black group formed by the three weeping women, Amédée in mourning for his father and a dozen or so of Gérard's old companions, elderly men with peaked hats whose long hair had grown gray. All the choice proof impressions that remained in the port-folio had now to be sold forthwith in order to raise a little money, as well as the few bits of paintings, the gifts in former days of friends who had attained more or less celebrity, and the remaining old-fashioned knick-knacks; in a word, all their poor art treasures that had served to make their home attractive. Then mother Gérard, in order that her oldest daughter might be a little nearer to the schools where she was employed to teach the piano, removed away up in the direction of Montmartre, where, in the rue Saint-Pierre, they obtained a small rez-de-chaussée that was not too dear for them, with a little garden in front of it about the size of a pocket-handkerchief.

Amédée, too, who had now no income beyond his hundred and twenty-five francs a month, was obliged to leave his too expensive lodging in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and sell the greater part of the old furniture. Retaining only his books and sufficient furniture for one small bed-room, he had made his nest in the garret of an old house in the faubourg Saint-Jacques. Montmartre and the rue Saint-Pierre were a long, long distance away, and now, in the time of their common affliction, he could not go as often as he would have desired to see those friends whom community of mourning had rendered dearer to him than ever.

His literary work remained to him as his sole consolation, and into this he threw himself heart and soul, deadening recollection by the friendly and powerful opiates of revery and poetry. He was beginning, moreover, to see his way more clearly before him, felt that he had something new to say to the world. He had already some time ago consigned to the flames his early verses, crude imitations of his favorite masters, together with his grand romantic drama in which the hero and heroine were to sing their love duo in the shadow of the gibbet. As a school-boy takes the longest road to reach his home, so he was at last returning to truth and simplicity. Choice and necessity at the same time impelled him to express with sincerity and feeling what fell within his own ken, to make himself master of the lowly idealism that lay in the lives of the humble folks among whom he

had passed his days, that resided in the mournful landscapes of the Parisian outskirts where his childhood had been spent; in a word, to paint from nature. He made the attempt, felt that he would be successful, and then came the finest and noblest hours of his existence, those, to wit, in which the artist who is already master of his instrument, and in whom the sensations of youth exist in all their abundant freshness, writes the first book that he knows to be good, and writes it with an entire unconsciousness of self, without even thinking that others will ever read it, working for himself alone, and simply for the delight of producing and of pouring forth from himself all his memories, all his imagination, all his heart. Those are instants of perfect happiness and unalloyed enthusiasm that he will never meet with again when he shall have eaten of the sweet fruit of success, when his pulses shall beat wildly with the desire of fame! Delightful instants, sacred instants, which can only be compared to the intoxication of a first love!

During the winter months that succeeded his father's death Amédée worked courageously. He would arise at six o'clock in the morning and light his lamp and the small china laundress' stove that afforded heat to his little apartment, and then, walking to and fro or bending over his page, the poet would vigorously apply himself to his struggle with words, images and ideas. At nine o'clock he would go out and breakfast at a neighboring dairy restaurant from whence he would proceed to

his office. There, when he had duly filled up his wearisome forms and blackened many sheets of paper, there still remained two or three hours before it was time to leave, and these he employed in reading books that he had borrowed in the morning from a circulating library in the rue Royer-Collard, taking notes the while on what he read ; for he had already come to the conclusion that one leaves college almost in a state of ignorance, and at the best has done little more than learn the manner in which knowledge may be acquired. He escaped from the ministry at night-fall and made his return to the faubourg by the way of the boulevard des Invalides and the boulevard Montparnasse, which, in those days, were still bordered by elms hundreds of years old ; and many a time the lamp-lighter, with his long fire-tipped lance in hand, running along in advance of him, would make the great gas-jets burst into brilliancy beneath the skeletons of the old leafless trees. This walk, which Amédée forced himself to take in order to protect his health, brought him about six o'clock to a working-man's dinner in a small restaurant facing the Val-de-Grâce that he was in the habit of frequenting ; then he climbed up to his garret and his rhymes, relit his lamp and stove, and cheerily ! hard at it until midnight. This ardent, continuous effort, this uninterrupted tension of the will served to maintain within his mind the heat, the animation, the excitation without which there can be no poetic production. His thought, with petals ceaselessly expanded, was

always in a state of readiness to receive the germs that the mysterious wind of inspiration might waft toward it ; and now and then, wondering to see his pen run so rapidly over the paper, he would pause, filled with an ineffable pride to have thus reduced to obedience tone and rhythm, and ask himself what supernatural power it was that enabled him to lure those divine, shy birds.

On Sundays he had the concierge of his house bring him in something to eat, delved industriously among his books all day and did not leave his garret until about five in the afternoon to go and dine with mamma Gérard. This was the only recreation that he took, or rather it was the only recompense he awarded himself. He crossed the whole breadth of Paris on foot, bought a cake for the dessert in the rue Fontaine, and then, thanks to his strong young legs, climbed without fatigue those steep and lonely lanes of the summit of Montmartre that were lighted in those days by the old-fashioned street-lamps suspended by cords and pulleys and where one might imagine himself to be in a corner of some remote province. He found them awaiting his arrival to place the soup on the table and the young man in his mourning habiliments took his place between the widow and the two orphans.

Alas ! how harsh and stern has life become in these late days for these poor women ! Damourette, member of the Institute and former recipient of the *Prix de Rome*, has not forgotten that he was once in



ON THE WAY TO MONTMARTRE.

the same studio with Gérard in the old days and has prevailed upon the directors of the *Beaux-Arts* to grant his widow a small yearly stipend, but it is only a trifle, scarcely sufficient to pay the rent. It is fortunate for them that good Louise, who, though only twenty-three, already begins to look like an old maid, can run about Paris all day with her roll of music under her black shawl. She has many pupils, and by reason of her efforts more than twenty houses in the city have become almost uninhabitable on account of little girls with red hands shaking their walls by the crashes of their chromatic scales. Thus Louise's earnings at the present time constitute the best part of the family's income. What a strange paradox is social life in great cities, where *Weber's Last Thought* can supply the price of a four pound loaf of bread and where the grocer's bill is paid with the returns from *Boccherini's Minuet*!

Do all they may, it is hard work making both ends meet with the Gérards, and pretty little Maria, she too, has endeavored to do what she could to be useful and help her mother and sister. She always manifested a great fondness for drawing; her father in former days gave her some lessons in crayon. She now goes and works at the Louvre, practises copying the pictures of Chardin and Latour. She goes there quite unattended. That is rather imprudent: she is so pretty. Louise, however, has not the time to accompany her and mamma Gérard is of course obliged to stay at home to do the housework and attend to the cooking, and so

the appearance of Maria at the *Musée* has already brought trouble to the heart of more than one young knight of the brush. In Flandrin's *atelier* several cases are mentioned of persistent melancholy, accompanied by loss of appetite ; and two of Signol's pupils, having detected each other prowling about the pretty copyist, now hate each other in secret as rivals and are revolving in their minds projects of a duel in the American style.

Were I to say that Maria is not somewhat flattered at seeing all these young admirers hovering timidly and respectfully around her, were I to assert that when she takes off her hat and hangs it upon one of the uprights of her easel it is only because the heat of the furnace gives her a headache and with not the very remotest idea of displaying her pretty hair, I should be lying like a candidate enunciating his principles. And yet the little one is becoming sedate, I give you my word for it, or at least wishes to become so. She works conscientiously and is making progress ; her last copy—the portrait of a young Marquise holding in her lap a little pug dog with a ribbon around its neck—is really not so bad.

And this copy was precisely the means of bringing a nice little wind-fall to the pretty artist.

Father Issachar, the bric-à-brac dealer of the quai Voltaire—a Jew of the old style, whose dirty braided overcoat gives one the itch only to look at it—comes up to Maria one day just as she is painting a rose into the powdered wig of her Marquise,

and raising a hat with grease enough on it to make soup for a whole barrackful of soldiers :

“Mees,” he says, “could you shoost baint me von dozen vamily bordraids ?”

At first the young girl does not understand at all, but the Jew finally makes his meaning clear, spite of his abominable jargon.

There is nothing that money will not buy nowadays, not even a patent of nobility. Provided that your pocket-book is sufficiently plethoric, there is nothing simpler. For cash down you procure for yourself at the Vatican—second corridor to the right, turn to the left, third door, there you are—a brand new title of Roman count. An heraldic agency—see advertisements—plants and rears for your account a genealogical tree in the shade of which you can give a fête-champêtre and set a table for twenty-five persons. You purchase a chateau with pepper-boxes at the corners—the pepper-boxes cannot be dispensed with—in a corner of some very reactionary province, you call upon your neighbors of the adjacent chateaux with a gold *fleur de lys* in your scarf, you give yourself out to be an out-and-out legitimist and a ferocious clerical, you give dinners and hunting parties, and the thing is done. It is even betting that your son will marry into a family of the faubourg Saint-Germain which can show its descent in a direct line from the Crusaders.

Only you must not neglect certain accessories in carrying out this agreeable diversion, notable among

which are the portraits of your ancestors. It is important that they should adorn the walls of the castle where you intend to regale your rustic friends. In the selection of this family collection, however, tact



is required. Let there be no exaggeration, if you will believe me. Do not go too far back into antiquity ; do not select as the founder of your race a knight armed cap-à-pie in steel, atrociously painted

on wood, with his shield in one of the corners of the panel. Do not attempt to go back further than the king who loved the ladies, there is a greater appearance of probability thus ; but content yourself, my stylish Porbus, with an ancestor whose gray beard meanders downward over a well-ironed ruff. Hold ! I saw an excellent example of this style only the other day near the place Royale, in an old clothes dealer's of the ancient rue du Pas-de-la-Mule. I remember that a poodle was just lifting up his leg against it as I was passing by. You might get that ancestor for about fifteen francs by beating the man down a little.

But on the whole, I should say, no, do not give yourself so much trouble. Go direct to the man who makes such things his specialty, to father Issachar. Never fear, he is not dead yet. It is in his place that magnificent ancestors are to be found ! And not dear, either. If you are willing to claim descent from nothing higher than people of the black robe, the price will be insignificant. Presidents with mortar-boards go dirt cheap. If you wish to be of "the sword," or have some of the high church dignitaries among your progenitors, it is no more than natural that the cost should be higher. Father Issachar, however, is the very best man that you can find to give you, at extremely moderate prices, a bishop in robes of ermine or a *mestre-de-camp* with a full wig of the time of Louis XIV., with the *cordons bleu*, if you desire it, and a cuirass under his red coat.

What answers very nicely in a collection of family portraits, now, is a small lot of pastels. What would you say to an *abbé* with goggle-eyes, to an old lady indecently décolletée, to a captain of dragoons in a tiger-skin cap (if he has the cross of Saint-Louis, it will cost you ten francs more)? Father Issachar, who knows his business, always has some thirty or so of these portraits in stock, in charming frames of the period, made expressly to his order in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and all these portraits have been buried in the ground at least two weeks and then riddled with bird-shot, in order to give them the necessary mouldiness and worm-holes.

Now you understand how it was that the estimable Israelite, making his weekly tour of inspection among the salons of the Louvre, had his attention attracted to little Maria as she was engaged in copying one of Latour's charming Marquises. He was in need just at that time of powdered Marquises, and it is an article very much in demand, the Marquise; it may be said to be a staple commodity. He requested the young girl to take her copy home with her and make for him twelve copies from this copy, only changing the color of the dress and adding some distinguishing mark to characterize each portrait. Thus, in place of a pug, Marquise No. 1 would hold a lap-dog, Marquise No. 2 a small monkey, Marquise No. 3 a bon-bon box, Marquise No. 4 a fan. The face might remain unchanged; in Father Issachar's

eyes there was no difference in resemblance between Marquises with powdered hair. He made it an express condition, however, that they should all be furnished with two patches, one near the right eye, the other on the left breast. That he insisted upon. In his eyes, the patch was the symbol of the eighteenth century.

Father Issachar, a just man, engaged to furnish the frames, the specially prepared paper and the crayons and to pay for each Marquise the sum of fifteen francs. Still further, he promised that if the first order should be filled to his satisfaction, he would within a short time give the young artist a commission for twelve canonessees of Remiremont and half a dozen gendarmes of the king's household.

I wish that you could have been present at the house of those Gérard ladies the evening when little Maria came home bringing the good news. Poor mother Gérard and Louise, who had just come in from distributing her demi-semi-quavers through the city, wept tears of gladness.

"What, little one," said mamma as she kissed her youngest daughter, "are *you*, too, going to put your finger in our kettle of soup?"

"Just look at the little sister!" said Louise, with a laugh that came from the heart. "She will earn a pile of money as big as she is herself. Do you know that I am jealous, I am, with my piano and my ungrateful art? . . . That is something like, the pastel! . . . *That* does not make a fright-

ful noise and disturb all the neighbors, and when you are old, you will be able to say: 'I never inflicted a piece of music on any one.'"

But Maria would not permit them to make sport of her. Ah! they had always treated her as a doll, a great half-grown girl, a spoiled child, incapable of doing anything but dress her hair and wear fine clothes. Well, well! They should see! They should see!

And so, when Amédée came to dinner on the following Sunday, bringing his cake, the whole story, with a hundred details, was related to him over and over again, and he was shown the first two Marquises, which Maria had already completed and endowed with patches as large as wafers.

She seemed that day to the young man more seductive, more charming than ever, and then it was that he felt the first stirrings of ambition. If he only had sufficient talent to raise him from his obscurity and poverty? If he were to become a famous writer, easily gaining a subsistence by his pen? After all, that was not beyond the bounds of possibility. Oh! what pleasure it would give him to ask this exquisite child to be his wife! How sweet it would be to feel that she looked to him for her happiness, that she was proud of him! . . . But there was no use in thinking of such things for the moment; they were all too poor. And then could Maria ever come to love him? He had already many a time asked himself this question, with a feeling of anxiety. In his heart—he was very sure that it was

so—the friendship of childhood had become a feeling of sincere tenderness, a genuine love, but there was nothing to induce him to believe that the same change had taken place in the heart of the young girl. She always treated the poet most affectionately, but only as a good friend, and she showed no more emotion in his presence than she had been wont to show in the old days when she and he used to lie in ambush behind father Gérard's green sofa to shoot the bear-skin cap.

Amédée had quite naturally made the Gérard family the confidants of his labors. As they sat around the oil-cloth cover upon which mother Gérard had placed the coffee service after the Sunday dinner, the young man would sometimes read to his friends in a slow, solemn voice the poem that he had composed during the week. A painter addicted to interiors, with the taste and perception to depict the lights and shades of home life, which used to produce such an impression on the old masters of the Dutch school, would have been deeply moved could he have looked upon the group formed by these four people in mourning. The poet, his manuscript in his left hand while with his right he gently caressed the air in rhythmic gesture, was seated between the two sisters. While Louise, however, a little too lean, faded before her time, not pretty, listened eagerly, her eyes fixed attentively upon the reader, pretty Maria, her attention wandering, with a little pout, almost, of ennui, was watching her mother as she sat calmly

knitting on the opposite side of the table, her spectacles well down on the end of her nose.

Alas ! In the course of these readings it was Louise alone who frequently gave utterance to her emotion by a sigh and who at times had her eye-lids swollen by big tears ; it was she alone who hit upon the appropriate, appreciative word to felicitate the poet, showing that she had understood, that she was touched. The very utmost that Maria accorded to Amédée, as he sat there still under the influence of the feeling produced by the declamation of his lines, was an : “ It’s very pretty,” a mere utterance of courtesy accompanied by a commonplace smile of thanks.

She did not care for poetry, then ? If he should marry her later on, would she still remain indifferent to her husband’s artistic efforts, to his intellectual life, would she even be insensible to the fame that he might win ? With what pain did Amédée ask himself this question !

It was not long before Maria inspired him with a new anxiety.

Maurice Roger and his mother had now been in Italy three months, and after two letters written from Milan in the early enthusiasm attendant upon the beginning of his journey, Amédée had remained without intelligence of his friend. He had excused this negligence on the part of easy-going Maurice, who had said to him with a smile when they parted that he must not expect epistolary regularity from him.

Now, however, every time that Amédée made a call upon the Gérard ladies, Maria never failed to ask him :

“ And your friend Maurice ? Have you any word from him ? ”

At first he had not given the matter a thought, but finally he came to be astonished by such persistence, and a feeling of suspicion even arose in his heart, which was somewhat sensitive under the continued coolness of the young girl.

Maurice Roger had made only three or four very brief calls upon the Gérards while the father was still alive, and always in Amédée's company. He had always maintained a most respectfully correct attitude toward Maria, and the two had never, perhaps, exchanged twenty sentences. How was it that Maria had retained such a well-defined recollection of this chance acquaintance, of this man whom she scarcely knew ? Was it possible that he could have produced such a deep impression, perhaps inspired a feeling in her heart ? Was she awaiting his return ? Did she desire to see him again ? Could it be that she was concealing a tender hope at the bottom of her heart when she thought of him ?

When these fears flashed through Amédée's brain, his heart was moved within him and a bitter taste arose in his mouth. Happy Maurice, who had only to show himself in order to inspire love ! Then, with a swift blush, the generous-souled poet repressed the petty feeling of envy. Every Sunday,



AMÉDÉE AT THE GÉRARD'S.

however, when Maria, with downcast eyes and voice that faltered a little, repeated her question : " And M. Maurice ? . . . You have no news from him ? " Amédée experienced a cruel sensation of discouragement and thought with a bitter feeling of sadness :

" She will never love me ! "

To overcome this new grief, he tried to devote himself still more assiduously to his work, but he could not recover his old-time fire and energy. Through the showers and sunlight of the dying month of March spring had arrived. It was bright day now when Amédée awoke at six o'clock in the morning. Opening the window of his garret and looking out over a sea of roofs, he admired the great bright sun slowly rising in a sky of tender gray. From the garden of the convent that lay beneath him came up a refreshing odor of herbage and of moist earth. In the alley of artificially trimmed lindens which led to a plaster Virgin standing in its niche of stone work, an early and almost imperceptible quivering, a presentiment, so to speak, of verdure was already beginning to run along the blackened branches, and the three almond-trees in the kitchen-garden were decked with their delicate flowers. The young poet, who had always looked upon sensual pleasure, with which he had had but slight acquaintance, with a feeling of horror, was overmastered by a languor that was enervating and at the same time pleasant. Maria's pure image, which he habitually called up upon awaking,

as if it were a prayer, soon became confused and melted from his recollection. He seated himself, however, for a minute or two at his work-table and proceeded to read over the last lines of a page that



he had begun, but his physical condition would not allow him to continue, and in the revery to which he gave himself up, he said to himself that he was twenty years old, and that it would be a good thing, after all, that he should enjoy life.

X

It is the first of May. The lilacs in the Luxembourg are in bloom. It has just struck four o'clock.

Amédée, to whom the bright sun and the clear sky have rendered the captivity of the office even more unendurable than usual, has left before the regular hour, and now, intoxicated by the odors of spring, is loitering in the Medici gardens near the lake, upon the bosom of which, to the enjoyment of the children of the quarter, a gentle north-east breeze is propelling in consort an entire squadron of miniature boats. All at once he hears his name called by a voice that rings like a flourish of trumpets at a country fair.—“How are you, Violette?”

It is Jocquelet, the future actor, Jocquelet, with his pug nose cleaving space like the prow of a first-class iron-clad, Jocquelet, superb, triumphant, decked out as magnificently as a Brazilian, with



THE LUXEMBOURG.

clean shaved cheeks, Jocquelet, the fondest hope of Regnier's class at the Conservatory, Jocquelet, who produced an enormous effect in the scene of the *Précieuses* at the last quarterly examination—he himself says so, without useless modesty—Jocquelet, in a word, who is certain to gain the first prize for comedy at the approaching competition and will make his début forthwith at the *Comédie Française*! All these things he tells in a single breath, like a task learned by heart, in his terrible voice of a quack selling razor-strop paste from a gilded carriage, and in two minutes the favorite word of theatrical people has resounded thirty times, serving to punctuate his sentences: I! I! I! I!

Amédée is only half glad of the encounter. Jocquelet has always been too noisy to suit him, and he wearies him. But after all he is an old comrade, and so, from politeness, the poet congratulates him on his early successes.

Jocquelet, however, now begins to ask questions. How is Amédée getting on? What is he doing? What progress is he making with his literary work? And all these inquiries are made with a warmth, a cordiality such as would induce one to believe that Jocquelet's friendship for Amédée is like that of Monomotapa. Nothing of the sort. Jocquelet interests himself in only one person in the world, and that person's name is Jocquelet. Only one is an actor or one is not. This fellow is, at all times and in every place, at the restaurant, in the omnibus, when putting on his suspenders, even while

kissing the girl he loves. When he says to any chance met person: "How do you do?" he puts so much soul into this extremely original question that the *interrogé* wonders if he is not, indeed, just recovering from a long and dangerous illness. Now in the present case Jocquelet finds himself in the presence of a young, poor and unknown poet. Under such circumstances, what is the proper rôle for a man of consideration like himself, a man of his importance, to play? Manifestly to show kindness to the young man, reassure his timidity, patronize him without too much hauteur. There you have the situation, and Jocquelet plays up to it.

Amédée, artless dupe, is touched by the friendly interest that is shown him, and confidently replies:

"Well, my dear friend, I have been working hard this winter. I am not dissatisfied; I think that I have made some progress. . . . But if you only knew how hard it is, how difficult to get along!"

He is about to confide to the actor the doubts and sufferings he experiences as a sincere artist, but Jocquelet, I tell you, thinks of no one but Jocquelet, and abruptly interrupting the poet, he says:

"You don't happen to have an effective poem, do you, . . . something short, a hundred or a hundred and fifty lines, . . . something suitable to be 'spoken,' in a word, to be declaimed?"

It so chances that Amédée has been copying out this very day at the office a war story, a heroic episode of the trenches before Sebastopol, that he

heard Colonel Lantz relate at Mme. Roger's in days gone by and that he has translated into verse imbued with patriotic feeling and marked by a strong military accent, verse which smells of powder and explodes like the crack of musketry. He takes the sheets from his pocket, and drawing the actor into the unfrequented alley of plane-trees which skirts the orangery of the Luxembourg, reads his poem in a low voice.

Jocquelet, who is not destitute of a certain kind of literary instinct and who scents, above all, something that may redound to his own advantage, is enthusiastic.

"You read your lines like a poet, that is to say, very badly," he says to Amédée. "But that makes no difference, it is a very taking thing, that battle of yours, and I see what I could make of it . . . with my organ! . . . But how is this," he continues, planting himself in front of his friend and looking him full in the face, "how is this, you spin poetry like this and no one knows anything about it? It is ridiculous. Are you trying to play Chatterton on us? But that sort of thing is out of date, its day has gone by. You must be brought forward, you must be pushed, and I take it on my shoulders to do it! You have nothing to do this evening, have you? Well, come with me and before six o'clock I will have your name in the mouth of twenty trumpets who will go blaring through Paris that there is a poet in the faubourg Saint-Jacques. I will bet, savage that you are, that you

have never been in the café de Seville. Why, my dear boy, it is our principal workshop where fame is manufactured. Here we are at the Odéon, here is the omnibus. *En route!* In twenty minutes we shall be at the boulevard Montmartre, and when we are there I am going to baptize you a great man with a glass of absinthe."

Amédée is dazed, carried away; he offers no resistance and climbs to the roof of the vehicle with his companion. "Ding, ding, ding, ding! . . . No transfers? Go on, driver." The omnibus rattles down toward the quais at a good pace, crosses the Seine and the Carrousel and passes in front of the Théâtre-Français, at which Jocquelet, thinking of his approaching début, shakes his fist, exclaiming: "It is you and me now!" And so the two young men roll along the asphalt of the boulevard until at last they reach the café de Seville.

Do not attempt to go and see it to-day, that old setting hen that has hatched out so many political and literary celebrities; you would find only an ordinary boulevard café, just like the rest of its kind, with groups of shabby little Jews discussing the odds on the approaching races, and here and there a poor broken-down *cocotte*, painted like Jezebel and dying of ennui over her glass of beer.

In the latter days of the second empire, however,—and it was the first of May, 1866, that Amédée Violette made his appearance there for the first time—the café de Seville was justly regarded as

one of the most remarkable places in Paris, for you must know that this glorious establishment has of itself sent forth to the world nearly, if not quite, all the high functionaries of our third republic. Be frank, *Monsieur le Préfet*, you who are down in your department yonder, presiding at the opening of the agricultural fair and playing the peacock in your silver-embroidered coat before long rows of wondering horned animals ; be frank, and admit that, at the time when you were opposing the official nominations in the columns of a democratic sheet, you had your pipe in the rack at the "Seville" with your name enamelled in white letters on its well colored bowl. Remember, *Monsieur le Député*, you who vote against every measure looking toward an increase in the number of causes for exemption from military duty, remember that in this very place, where you had come to have your daily game of dominoes, you have a hundred times railed against standing armies, habituating yourself to the riot of public assemblies by the racket of the smoking-room and preparing yourself for parliamentary victories by shouting : "Six at both ends—count up." And you yourself, *Monsieur le Ministre*, whom a clerk dating back from the time of the tyrants now and then addresses as "Your Excellency" without your taking offence thereat, you too, even you have been a pillar of the café de Seville, and such a faithful customer that the lady cashier even used to call you by your first name. Yes, remember, future President of the Council, how you used to feel when

that sedentary lady whom no one had ever known to come down from her desk and who, some funny dog used to say, was afflicted with two wooden legs, would beckon you up to the counter by a motion of her finger and whisper, not without an inflection of severity in her voice : " Monsieur Eugène, you must not forget that little bill of yours."

Notwithstanding his title of poet, Amédée had not the gift of prophecy. When he beheld all these men, rather negligent as to their appearance for the most part, sitting around the tables in front of the café de Seville and taking refreshments, the young man never for a moment suspected that he had before him the greater part of the legislators who, a few years later, were to give prosperity to France. Otherwise he would have respectfully noted down the name of each drinker and the color of his drink, and in the end that would have been a very great advantage to him as a mnemonic method of understanding our parliamentary combinations, which, it must be admitted, are a little complicated. For instance, would it not have been a convenient and agreeable thing for him to know that the recent sugar law was voted by a compact majority of the absinthes and the vermouths, or to learn that the fall of the cabinet day before yesterday was to be attributed simply to the disloyal and perfidious defection of the cocktails and the ratafia and waters?

Jocquelet, who professed the most advanced political opinions, shook hands here and there tumultuously and patronizingly with a few of the

statesmen of the future, who, under pretence of getting up an appetite, were busily employed in laying the foundations for a fine assortment of stomach and liver diseases against their fortieth year ; then, still followed by Amédée, he entered the interior of the establishment.

There were more of the politicians here, but there were also some poets and *littérateurs* as well. They occupied the tables indiscriminately and were on good terms together, but there was no mistaking the two classes. The politicians were all beard, the men of letters were all hair.

Jocquelet steered straight toward the wild and magnificent red poll of the imaginative poet Paul Sillery, a good-looking young fellow with an alert expression of countenance, who was carelessly stretched out at length upon the red velvet of a bench before a table, forming a circle around which were three other fleeces worthy of our early race of kings.

“ My dear Paul,” said Jocquelet in his most resounding voice, handing Amédée’s manuscript to Sillery, “ here are some verses which I think are splendid and which I am going to declaim as soon as I can get a chance, at some concert or some benefit. Read them and see what you think of them. . . . Allow me to present the author, M. Amédée Violette. Amédée, I make you acquainted with M. Paul Sillery.”

All the Long-Hairs—the wearers, by the by, all had young and pleasing faces—turned their eyes



AMÉDÉE IS INTRODUCED TO THE LONG-HAIRS.

in curiosity upon the new-comer, whom Paul Sillery courteously invited to take a seat with the consecrated formula : "What will you have to drink ?" Then he set himself to reading the leaves that Jocquelet had given him.

Amédée sat on the edge of his chair, quite unstrung by his timidity. Paul Sillery already enjoyed a certain reputation among the younger poets. He had started a small literary paper, the *Wasp*, which published on its first page caricatures of celebrated men with a big head on a diminutive body, and Amédée had read in it now and then Paul Sillery's poems, full of impertinence and grace. An author who had gone to print ! A newspaper editor ! To the innocent Amédée it was something enormous ; he was not aware as yet that the *Wasp* had only fourteen subscribers. He looked upon Sillery as an Alp, and with heart beating wildly, he awaited in fear and agony the verdict of such a terrible judge.

At the expiration of a minute, however, Sillery said between his teeth, without raising his eyes from the manuscript :

"Attention ! . . . That is good poetry, that is."

A great wave of delight poured through the breast of the poet of the faubourg Saint-Jacques.

As soon as he had finished reading, the editor of the *Wasp* arose from his bench and stretched out both his hands to Amédée over the glasses and the water-jugs.

"First of all," he exclaimed, with bright enthu-

siasm, " let me give you a good shake of the hand. It is wonderful, it is admirable, your battle piece. It has Mérimée's precision and luminousness, together with color, imagery, everything, in a word, in which Mérimée falls short of being a poet. And it is quite new. My dear M. Violette, I congratulate you with all my heart. I cannot ask you on behalf of the *Wasp* for this fine poem, which Jocquelet is only too happy to have to interpret and which will, I hope, be the means of bringing him fortune, but I beg from you, as a great favor, some lines for the paper. They will be as good as these, I am sure, if not better. I must tell you in advance, however, that we shall not be able to pay you for your copy ; the *Wasp* is not prosperous, I might even say that it has but one wing to fly with. To keep it going a few months longer, I recently had recourse to an usurer, who turned over to me among other commodities, in place of the classical stuffed crocodile, a trick horse that he had obtained from the wreck of a circus that had gone to smash. My first thought was to get on the noble animal and ride him to the *Bois*, but at the round-point of the Champs-Élysées he began to waltz around the fountain, so that I was forced to part with the choreographic quadruped at a considerable loss. Your collaboration on the *Wasp*, therefore, will have to be gratuitous, as is, I am sorry to say, that of all the other contributors. But you will give me credit, my dear Violette, for having been the first to salute you by the rare and glorious title

of a true poet, and you will let me be the first, will you not, to afford you that delightful intoxication that is produced by the smell of one's first printed proofs? Is it a bargain?"

Was it a bargain? Amédée was deeply touched by so much good grace and brotherly cordiality; he was so moved that he splashed about in the most pitiable way when he endeavored to find a few words in which to express his gratitude.

"Do not thank me," Paul Sillery resumed, with his agreeable, rather sceptical smile, "and do not think that I am better than I am. If all your verse is as strong as that which I have just read, you will soon publish a volume which will cause a sensation, and, who can tell? perhaps inspire me, among the very first, with a contemptible fit of jealousy. Poets are not greatly superior to other mortals; like the immense majority of the sons of Adam, they are vain and envious, only they retain the faculty of enthusiasm, the gift of admiration, and therein lie their superiority and their honor. To-day I can think of nothing but the pleasure of having discovered a white black-bird, an original and sincere poet, and with your permission, we will hold high festival over the happy encounter. The money obtained for the waltzing horse having barely sufficed to pay the printer of the *Wasp* what was due him, I am not in funds this evening, but I have a 'tick' with father Lebuffle, and I invite you all to dine at his cook-shop. Afterward we will go to my house, where I expect some other

friends, and there you will read us your verses, Violette, we will all read verses, and we will have a regular orgy of rhyme."

This proposition was favorably received by the three young men who grew their hair like so many Clodions or Chilperics. As to Violette, at that moment he would have followed Paul Sillery down to Hades.

Jocquelet could not accompany them. He had, so he said, promised his evening to a lady, and he gave this excuse with such a knowing smile that every one was convinced that he was going to be crowned with myrtles at the house of a princess of the blood, while in reality the mistress of Jocquelet's affections at that time was simply one of his comrades at the Conservatory, a great stick of a woman, black as a mole and overrunning with pretentiousness, who was fitting herself for tragic parts and allowed no trifling on the part of her lover until after she had inflicted on him the dream of *Athalie*, the curses from *Camille* and the monologue from *Phædra*.

After paying for what they had drunk, Sillery, giving his arm to Amédée and followed closely by the three Merovingians, left the café, and elbowing his way through the crowd that obstructed the sidewalk of the faubourg Montmartre, conducted his guests to father Lebuffle's table d'hôte, which was situated on the third floor of a house in the rue Lamartine, but betrayed itself at the foot of the stair-case by the sickening odor of grease.

They found there, already seated at a table, the cloth on which was quite remarkable for the number of wine spots with which it was decorated, two or three fierce Long-Hairs and four or five hirsute Beards, to whom father Lebuffle was serving soup, assisted by a woman servant drunk with fatigue. The name under which Sillery had spoken of the proprietor of the establishment must have been a nick-name, for that stout personage in shirt-sleeves did in fact commend himself to attention by his bovine strength and his melancholy eyes, like those of a ruminating animal. Amédée was surprised to notice that father Lebuffle addressed the greater part of his guests as "thou," and as soon as the new-comers had seated themselves at table, he asked in a whisper of Sillery the cause of this familiarity.

"It arises from the misfortunes of the times, my dear Violette," the editor of the *Wasph* replied, as he unfolded his napkin. "We no longer have a Mæcenas or a Lorenzo the Magnificent among us, and father Lebuffle is the latest protector of art and literature. This low restaurant-keeper, who has perhaps never read a book or seen a picture, has a hankering for painters and poets and allows them to cultivate in his establishment the precious plant debt, which, unlike other kinds of vegetation, grows the more rapidly the less it is watered by payments on account. The good fellow must be pardoned," he added, lowering his voice, "for his petty sin, a trifle of vanity. He desires to be treat-

ed by the artists on a footing of equality, of friendship. Those who have a great many entries against them on his ledger come, for that reason, to address him as "thou," and I, alas! am of that number. Thanks to that circumstance, however, I am going to offer you something to drink a little less purgative than the so-called wine in that carafe, against which I caution you to be on your guard. . . . Say, Lebuffle, my friend and guest here, M. Amédée Violette, will sooner or later be a celebrated poet. Treat him accordingly, old man, and go and get us a bottle of Moulin-à-Vent.

The conversation between the Beards and the Long-Hairs soon became general. Is it necessary to mention that they were all animated, the former in politics, the latter in literature, by the most revolutionary sentiments? At the appearance of the sardines, which had manifestly been cured in lamp-oil, a terrible Beard, the blackest of them all, a beard which ran up into its owner's eyes and came straggling out of his nose and ears in little tufts of hair, gave utterance to a few elegiac regrets over the sweet memory of Jean Paul Marat, and declared that the next time the programme of the friend of the people must be realized and a hundred thousand heads must fall into the basket.

"Name of a dog, Flambart, but you have a heavy hand!" exclaimed a Beard of less importance, one of those beards which degenerate into side-whiskers along about thirty and become left-centre and conservative. "A hundred thousand heads!"

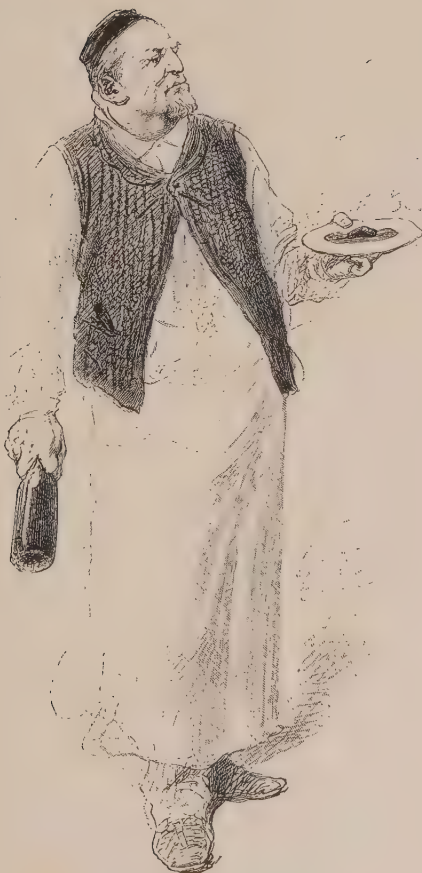
"That is a minimum," replied the sanguinary Beard.

Now this name of Flambart announced to Amédée that behind that blood-thirsty beard was concealed a photographer notorious for the number of his failures in business, and the young man could not help saying to himself that if the hundred thousand heads in question had posed in front of the camera of the aforesaid Flambart and thus made money for his establishment, he would not now be evincing such impatience to see them grinning between the posts of the guillotine.

The language held by the literary Long-Hairs was not less anarchical of its kind. With the appearance of the roast, which, if appearances are not deceiving, had been taken from that legendary animal known as mad cow, the longest and thickest of all those wigs, which adorned the head and shoulders of a young novelist—he was guilty of not combing them often enough, be it said in confidence—imparted to the other manes the subject of a romance which should truly have caused them all to stand on end with horror: for the violation of a dead woman in a cemetery by moonlight constituted the principal episode of this pleasing fiction.

All the same there was a kind of hesitation, a slight movement of recoil among the listeners, and Sillery, with a bit of chaff in his look and voice, asked the Absalom of a novelist:

"Why, in the devil's name do you want to tell such a story as that?"



FATHER LEBUFFLE.

But the Long-Hair would condescend to give no other answer than, in a voice of thunder :

“To produce a stunning effect on the Bourgeois !”

And no one thereupon found any objection to make.

“A stunning effect” on the bourgeois ! That was, in fact, the burning desire, the dearest hope of all those young men, and that desire was constantly betraying itself in their most trivial words. Amédée doubtless looked upon it as legitimate, and even praiseworthy, still he did not believe—must we record his want of confidence?—that so many glorious efforts would ever be crowned with success. He even went so far as to ask himself if the character of the bourgeois, if his essential being even—and consequently his strength—did not consist precisely in ignoring, not only the works, but even the very existence of those who endeavor to master his reason, and he reflected, not without a feeling of sadness, that when the *Vasp* should have published the deathly composition of the young novelist, the bourgeois, the indomitable bourgeois, would know absolutely nothing of it, and would go along peaceably, without being the least bit “stunned,” pursuing his favorite habits, such as tapping the barometer to see if it will change from variable, or saying, with a deep sigh : “I feel better now,” after having swallowed his soup.

Notwithstanding these mental reservations, which

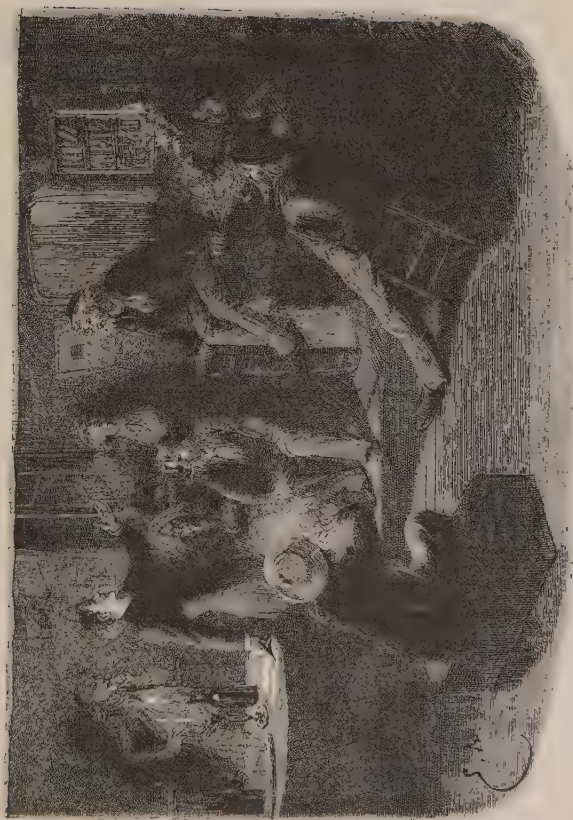
Amédée reproached himself for entertaining with the uncomfortable conviction that he himself was an unclean and contemptible Philistine, the poet was greatly pleased with his new friends and with the unknown world that had opened to his view. Cheerful gayety and unconcern for the moment reigned in this corner of Bohemia, where the inhabitants got drunk on monstrous paradox and mad verbal excess. That sovereign charm, youth, was there, and Amédée, who, until this time, had lived in his hole in darkness, felt his nature expanding in this warm atmosphere.

After a horrible dessert of cheese and prunes, however, father Lebuffle's pensioners separated. Sillery conducted Amédée and the three Merovingians to the little scantily furnished apartment that he occupied in an entresol of the rue Pigalle, and presently half a dozen more members of the poetic guild, who would also have furnished magnificent trophies to the scalping-knife of an Apache warrior, came in to reinforce the symposium, which was accustomed to assemble there every Wednesday evening.

It was at once evident that there was a scarcity of chairs, but Sillery went to a dark closet and pulled out an old trunk that afforded seats for two, while he, as master of the house, contented himself with taking a seat from time to time upon the marble chimney-piece and letting his legs dangle over the hearth. With these arrangements the company was extremely comfortable, especially when an old

woman in a dirty cap—the concierge, probably—had placed upon a stand in the middle of the room six bottles of beer, as many glasses of which no two were alike, and, in a great salver for flowers, an open paper of tobacco, together with pipes and cigarette-paper.

And then, wrapped in clouds of smoke, they went to work to recite verses. The rule governing the singing at a village wedding obtained here also—each one something in his turn. Called up by Sillery, each poet arose without further solicitation, placed his chair in front of him and resting his hand upon the back, proceeded to declaim his sonnet or his elegy. It was quite evident that several of the bards were deficient in genius, and some of them were even rather grotesque. Among the rest was a little young man with a cadaverous face about as big as two pats of butter, who declared in a long composition in *terza-rima* that the harem of an Asiatic satrap would not suffice to assuage his burning thirst for pleasure; and a fat-cheeked fellow, with the ruddy color of a provincial freshly come to town, announced in a litany of strophes his firm resolve to die of languor on account of the treason of a courtesan with a brow of marble; while the true facts of the case were that this peaceable fellow was living with an unsophisticated daughter of the people, a burnisher by trade, whom he had reduced to a state of slavery and who used to blacken his boots for him every morning before he went to his studio.



PIPES AND POETRY AT PAUL SILLERY'S.

But, ridicule aside, such an Areopagus, composed, as upon the whole it was, of poets who all knew their trade and some of whom were endowed with real talent, inspired Amédée with a feeling of respect and fear, and it was with a dry mouth and a sinking of the heart that he arose when Sillery called to him :

“Your turn, new man ! Give us your ‘Trenches before Sebastopol.’”

Like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, however ; like the born poet that he was, Amédée mastered his emotion and recited his martial rhymes in a ringing voice. The last stanza of the poem was hailed with a round of vehement applause, and all the audience arose and surrounded Amédée to felicitate him and have a nearer view of him.

“Why, it is splendid !”

“Entirely new !”

“It will be enormously successful !”

“If *that* is not successful, what is there that can arouse the public ?”

“Give us something else ! . . . Give us something else !”

Reassured, encouraged, master of himself, he recited a popular scene, into which he had infused a large measure of the tenderness that he felt for the poor ; he also declaimed to them some of his Parisian landscapes, and then a series of sonnets entitled “Hope of Love,” the inspiration of which was due to his dear Maria ; and he astonished all

those poets by the variety and the flexibility of his talent. At every new recital, the bravos burst forth like a clap of thunder, and the young man's heart swelled within him in the joyous delight of his success. Each man struggled with his neighbor to get near Amédée in order to express his personal admiration and shake him by the hand. Some who were there that night were destined later on to wound him by their low envy and their treason, but now, in the generous candor of their youth and their enthusiasm, they hailed him as a master.

What a delirious evening it was ! Between one and two o'clock in the morning, Amédée, with hands yet warm from the last kind pressure of his friends, with heart and brain drunk with the heady wine of praise, returned through the fairy-land of a wondrous moon-lit night with light and cheerful steps to the faubourg Saint-Jacques, and in the cool night wind which caressed his face and set his garments flying, he thought that he recognized the breath of fame.

XI

SUCCESS, which in general is as lame and halting as justice, now seemed to be hastening toward Amédée at the double-quick. The rising poet was already the subject of conversation at the café de *Seville* and the symposia of the Long-Hairs. His series of sonnets, originally published in the *Wasp*, so delighted certain journalists that they reprinted portions of them in sheets of large circulation. Finally, ten days after the meeting between Amédée and Jocquelet, the latter recited the "Trenches before Sebastopol" in a splendid entertainment given at the *Gaité* for the benefit of an old and illustrious actor who had become blind and fallen into want.

This dramatic solemnity, to use the language of the advertisements, had been terribly stupid at the commencement. The audience was composed chiefly of those who make it a point to be present

on all occasions of ceremony, that public that is satiated and surfeited with spectacle even to nausea, and which, on this warm evening of May, in the suffocating atmosphere of the hall, was even more wearied and listless than usual.

The newspaper men had sunk down in their arm-chairs and gone to sleep, and on the red background of the boxes the faces of the women, almost green beneath their paint, gave evidence of the overpowering lassitude consequent upon a winter of pleasures. The Parisians were all there, mechanically, from profession or from habit; they had come without the slightest desire of coming, as they had been coming for all time, criminals sentenced to a life-time of "first nights," and so torpid that they were not even conscious of the horror of seeing each other grow old.

A programme much too long, as is always the case in entertainments of this kind, dragged its slow length along before this hypnotized audience. Fragments of plays were acted that were familiar to every one, airs from operas were sung that had gone out of date even on the street-organs. The public, always the same, saw its actors, always the same, pass before it on the stage, and the most famous of them were the most monotonous; the comic man abusing his "tic," the lover talking distractedly through his nose, and the great coquette, the bright one *par excellence*, the last of the Célimènes, distilling over her rôle so leisurely that when she commenced an adverb ending in *ly*, one might almost

have had time to go out and drink a glass of beer and smoke a cigarette before she reached the end of the said adverb.

At the most sleepy moment of this sleepest of evenings, however, and just after the actors of the Comédie-Française had scattered a few supplementary poppies about the house by their pontifical rendering of an act from a tragedy, all at once Jocquelet appeared, Jocquelet, still a pupil of the conservatory, appearing in public for the first time and only by exceptional favor, Jocquelet, quite unknown to every one, closely buttoned up in his black coat, too small, notwithstanding the two packs of playing-cards that he had put in his boots to make himself taller. He appeared, brimful of audacity, strutting upon tip-toe, raising toward the gallery his pug-nosed, bull-dog face, and in his voice that was fit to tumble down the walls of Jericho or awaken the dead of Jehoshaphat, he gave his friend's poem without a break, but intelligently and with a fine heroic movement and accent.

The effect produced was considerable. It was a new sensation, this brazen, common-place, but powerful actor, these verses, so picturesque and yet so modern—something new, only think of it!—for this public that was satiated with antiquities. What a pleasant surprise! Two first appearances at once! To discover a poet whose works had never been published, an actor who had never been seen! It was taking a bite from two green apples. Every one shook off his torpor. The anæsthetized

journalists awoke, the exsanguious ladies, ready to fall with sleep, resumed their animation as far as they could, and when Jocquelet enunciated the last rhyme with a supreme flourish of trumpets, every one applauded as if they would split their gloves.

From one of the wings of the stage, behind an upright pasted thick with old advertisements, Amédée Violette listened delightedly to the sound of the distant applause, like the rattling of a storm of hail. He scarcely dared believe it was real. Was it truly his poem that was producing so great a sensation, that was causing that icy house to melt? Soon there was no longer room for doubt. Jocquelet, who had been recalled three times, threw himself into the poet's arms and in embracing him daubed his face with paint diluted with perspiration.

"Well, little one? Hey? That's the way to do it!" he exclaimed, ready to burst with self-content and vanity. "You heard how I sent that at them!"

And forthwith came twenty, thirty, a hundred people from the front of the house, most of them in white tie and correct evening dress, all with an air of cordiality and smiling face, asking to see the author and his interpreter, requesting an introduction, felicitating them with warm words and a grasp of the hand. Yes! it was indeed success, an instantaneous, overwhelming success; it was indeed that tropical flower of the Parisian hot-house which opens but rarely, but then splendidly and with the noise of thunder.

A large, common-looking man with a brutal expression of face, wearing splendid diamonds in his shirt, came up in turn to clasp Amédée's hand, and in a coarse voice, the voice of a drunkard, which would have admirably served the purpose of a tout or a street peddler, asked for the manuscript of the poem that had just been recited.

"I want to put you on the first page of my tomorrow's number, young man, and I print eighty thousand. . . . Victor Gaillard, director of the *Daily Racket*. . . . Does that suit you?"

And he carried off the manuscript without waiting for the poet's thanks, who trembled with joy at the thought that his work had inspired this famous Barnum of the press, the most audacious advertiser in France or Europe, with this caprice, and that his verses would be read by two hundred thousand people.

Yes! it was indeed success, and Amédée became acquainted with its first bitterness the very next day when he reached the *café de Seville*, where he was in the habit now of going every two or three days at absinthe time. His verses had appeared that morning in the *Racket*, printed in large type and preceded by a few eulogistic lines drawn up by Victor Gaillard to the beating of the bass-drum. The moment that Amédée entered the café he perceived that he was the object of general attention, and the poetical Long-Hairs received him with bravos and acclamations; but by certain delicate shades of physiognomy—embarrassed looks, bitter



JOCQUELET CONGRATULATES AMÉDÉE.

smiles—the sensitive young man became aware, with a sudden feeling of melancholy, that he had already become an object of envy.

“I warned you that it would be so,” said Paul Sillery, dragging him away to a corner of the café. “Our good little friends are not feeling good, and it is only too natural. The greater part of these rhymesters, it must be confessed, are only journey-men jewellers, and now they are jealous of their master. Above all, pretend that you see nothing of it; they would never forgive you for having fathomed their evil feelings. . . . And then, too, some indulgence must be extended to them. You have got your fine lieutenant’s epaulette, Violette; don’t be hard on the poor clod-hoppers. They too are fighting after their manner for the flag of poetry, and ours is a regiment of need and misery. . . . Now you, for your own part, must look out for yourself and profit by your luck. You are a celebrity for forty-eight hours. See! the politicians even are looking at you with the eyes of curiosity, the beard over the shoulder, and yet the poet, in the esteem of those austere citizens, is an inferior and useless being. It is as much as ever that they tolerate Victor Hugo, and they only do so on account of his *Châtiments*. . . . So you are now the lion of the hour. Lose no time. On the boulevard just now, I met Massif, the bookseller of the passage des Princes. He has read the *Racket*; he is waiting to see you. Carry all your verses to him to-morrow; there is enough to make a volume. Massif will

publish you at his expense and you can be out in a month. You will not get that great stupid Gail-lard into your toils a second time ; he can only have had a passing caprice for you. But never mind ! I know your book and I am certain of its success. You are started. Forward, march ! And, do you know, I am really better than I thought I was, for your good luck gives me pleasure."

The words of this kind-hearted friend quickly dissipated the painful feeling that Amédée had lately experienced, and besides, he was passing through one of those periods of elation in which it is difficult to admit that there is such a thing as evil in the world. He devoted a few moments to the society of the poets, constraining himself to be more gracious and more friendly with them than ever, and left them, ingenuous youth, persuaded that he had disarmed them by his modesty ; then, impatient to share his joy with his friends the Gérard ladies, he climbed with nimble foot to the summit of Montmartre and reached their house at dinner-time.

They were not expecting him, and all there was for dinner that evening was a vegetable soup and what remained of the boiled meat from the day before, eked out with gherkins, but Amédée brought his cake, as usual, and along with it two sauces which will always make the most Spartan menu seem delicious, to wit, happiness and hope.

They had already read the papers up there in the rue Saint-Pierre, they knew that the poem had been applauded at the Gaîté, they had seen it in

print in the most conspicuous part of the paper, and—faith ! so much the worse !—they were all so glad, so glad that they kissed Amédée on both cheeks. Then mamma Gérard remembered that there were still five or six bottles of old Chamber-tin in the cellar, and even if you had had a force of armed men with you, you would not have prevented the excellent woman from at once taking her key and candle and going in quest of that one of the old bottles that was most thickly covered with dust and cob-webs, so that they might drink the health of the triumphant one. As for Louise, she was radiant with joy. In several of the houses where she had given her lessons, people had spoken in her hearing of those beautiful, admirable verses published in the *Racket*, and she was very proud, “do you hear sir ?” to think that the author was a friend of hers. What put the cap-sheaf to Amédée’s satisfaction, however, was that Maria for the first time seemed to show an interest in poetry and said to him several times over, with such a pretty little air of vanity :

“But do you know that it is very fine, that battle of yours. . . . But say, Amédée, you are going to to be a great poet, a celebrated man. . . . You have a splendid future !”

Ah ! the sweet, the exquisite hopes that he carried home with him that evening to his chamber up so many flights of stairs in the faubourg Saint-Jacques ! They gave him delightful dreams, and they were still perfuming his thoughts the next

morning when the concierge brought him in two letters.

More good luck ! The first contained two one hundred franc notes, with Victor Gaillard's card felicitating Amédée afresh and requesting for the paper a few pages of prose, a novel, a fancy sketch, whatever he might prefer. On the other envelope the young man recognized, with a cry of delighted surprise, the writing of Maurice Roger.

"I am just returned to Paris, my dear Amédée," the traveller wrote, "and it is your success that first meets me and bids me welcome. I must embrace you without delay and tell you how happy it made me. Come to me at my bachelor quarters in the rue Monsieur-le-Prince at four oclock ; we will dine together and spend the evening in company."

Ah ! what a good thing, how sweet, life seems to the young poet this morning, and how glad he is to live ! Dressed in his best, he joyously makes his way down the old rue Saint-Jacques, where bunches of asparagus and baskets of strawberries on the fruiterer's stands are perfuming the air, hastens to the boulevard Saint-Michel and buys himself an elegant gray soft hat and a pretty scarf to do honor to Spring, and then, at the café Voltaire, where he breakfasts, changes his second hundred franc note so that he may have the boyish pleasure of jingling in his pocket the bright louis d'or that he owes to his labor and his success. At the ministry, where the head clerk—a good fellow who turns an occasional rhyme and sings a song

at the dinners at the *Caveau*—has already complimented him upon his poem, Amédée only makes an appearance to request leave of absence for the afternoon and take from his desk the manuscript of his volume.

He is again in the street in the bright May sunlight. As if he was a nabob, he hires an open carriage by the hour, and tells the driver to take



him to Massif's in the passage des Princes. The publisher of *les Jeunes*, so well known by his magnificent black beard and immense bald head, upon which some wag once advised him to paste his announcements, the publisher of the more daring authors and of sensational books who once shared with Charles Bazile, the author of the *Démoniaques*, the honor of an imprisonment in Sainte-Pélagie, is

in his private office, which is adorned with etchings and bright with books in handsome bindings ; he receives this lean-faced rhymester rather freezingly. Amédée Violette gives his name, however, and behold ! at once there is a broad smile, a grasp of the hand and the eager sniff of a connoisseur as he unfastens the package containing the manuscript.

“Let us see. . . . Just so. . . . With the blank pages and the half-titles, we will be able to make two hundred and fifty pages of it.”

And so the bargain is fairly concluded. Quick, bring a sheet of stamped paper and we will sign a bit of an agreement. Massif is to be at the expense of the first edition of one thousand, and if there are any printed beyond that number—and *parbleu*, yes, there will be !—he is to pay the author fifty centimes a copy. But Amédée has signed without reading ; all that he requires is that the volume shall appear without delay.

“Rest easy, my dear poet ! In three days you shall have the first proofs, and in a month we will be out.”

Can it be possible ? Is not Amédée dreaming ? He, the son of poor father Violette, the junior clerk in a public office, he is to have his book printed, and that within a month, without delay ! His readers, friends who are unknown to him, will be moved by his emotions, will suffer with his sufferings ; young people will love him and find in his poetry an echo to their sentiments ; women will

sit and dream, holding his book with a finger between the leaves, while they croon over to themselves some favorite stanza that has touched their hearts !

He needs a confidant in his gladness ; he feels the necessity of a true friend to whom he can tell it all.

“ Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, driver.”

He bounds up Maurice's stair-case four steps at a time. The key is in the lock. He enters. There is the traveller, standing in the midst of the disorder of partly emptied trunks.

“ Maurice ! ”

“ Amédée ! ”

What an embrace ! And what a length of time they remain with hand clasping hand, looking at each other with a smile of happiness !

Maurice is more gracious, more seductive even than in the old days. His beauty has assumed a more manly character, and the gold of his mustache shines out upon the tawny complexion where the sun has left his mark. And what a good fellow he is ! How he rejoices in his friend's first success !

“ I am certain that your book will turn every one's head. I have always said that you were a true poet. . . . You will see ! ”

He is very well satisfied with his own affairs, too. His mother permits him to follow the vocation of his choice and does not insist on his finishing his law studies. He is going to hire a studio and devote himself to painting. That was all arranged

in Italy, where Mme. Roger was witness to her son's enthusiasm over the works of the great masters. Ah, Italy ! Italy ! Thereupon he starts upon the subject of his trip and shows Amédée the knick-knacks, the souvenirs of all sorts that crowd the room. He takes up a little terra-cotta, a reduction of the Antinoüs in the Museum at Naples, and turns it about in his fingers so as to show its different aspects ; he opens a port-folio filled to bursting with large photographs, turns them over hap-hazard, passes them to his friend with exclamations of retrospective admiration :

"See, the Colosseum ! . . . The ruins of Pæstum ! . . . And this antique of the Vatican ! . . . And this fresco of Michael Angelo ! . . . Ah ! isn't it beautiful ?"

As he looks over the pictures, he calls to mind the things that he has seen and the impressions that they produced. In this alley of the Boboli Garden at Florence there was a band of school-boys from the church school, in knee-breeches and buckled shoes, like the abbés of old times, and nothing was more droll than to see those boy priests playing at leap-frog. . . . And there, on the *Riva dei Schiavoni*, he followed a Venetian woman. . . . Oh ! a Venetian !

"Just imagine, my dear fellow, one would suppose that all she had on could not have cost four cents ! No bonnet, a yellow shawl with green fringe and shoes without quarters dragging through the mud ; but I never before knew what a beauti-

ful red-haired woman is, and in the den where she took me I may say that I possessed in her person all Giorgione's goddesses and all Titian's courtesans ! ”

For Maurice is the same as ever, a libertine and a hard case, but he admits it, he even boasts of it with such joyous warmth, such a bright spirit of youthfulness, that it only constitutes another attraction in him ; and as it is striking seven and they must dine, he makes his way through the Latin Quarter, giving his arm to Amédée and still entertaining him with the story of his adventures beyond the Alps.

“ Ah ! my friend, it is in that country that love has its true abode. People there only live for that. The lowest of women, she whose pretended brother will show her photograph to strangers in the cafés, will conceive a passion for you if you only tell her in a certain way that she is pretty and that you like her. I give you my word of honor, I have more than once been loved in earnest, I have been loved for myself, in hovels where some ruffian had taken me for forty sous ! ”

When Maurice is once started on this subject, he never knows when to stop, and all through the dinner, which is served for the two friends beside a window in a restaurant of the boulevard Saint-Michel, the traveller, excited by the champagne, continues to describe his experiences in Rome and Florence. This kind of conversation abounds in danger for Amédée. We are not to forget that for

some time past his innocence has begun to hang heavily upon the chaste poet of the attics and that this evening he has a few gold pieces in his pocket ringing the chime of pleasure. While Maurice with his elbows on the table relates his tales of love, Amédée, by the gas that has just been lighted and that illuminates the tender green of the early foliage with its harsh, crude light, watches the well dressed women as they pass to and fro along the wide side-walk in front of the terraces of the cafés, saluting with a nod of the head the students with whom they are acquainted. There is pleasure in the air, and, faith ! it is Amédée—veil your faces, virtuous people !—who, as he rises from the table, reminds Maurice that it is Thursday and that there is a summer-night's festival at Bullier's, and again it is he who adds in a tone of deliberation :

“ Suppose we look in there for a few moments ? ”

“ I am quite willing,” the rake cheerfully replies. “ Aha ! so we are beginning to thaw out a little at last, are we, Monsieur de la Violette ? Let us go to Bullier's, by all means. I shall be glad to learn whether I still love the fair Parisians as much as ever.”

They direct their steps toward the observatory, smoking cigarettes as they go along. In the roadway, women in pairs, going in the same direction as themselves, are being whirled along in victorias, and their spring dresses and flower-decked hats make spots of light upon the darkness, and every

moment the two friends are elbowed by bands of students marching in Indian file and bellowing out some popular melody.

Here's Bullier's ! They pass through the brilliantly lighted entrance, and as soon as their foot is on the staircase that leads down to the famous ball-room, their nostrils are assailed by an acrid odor of dust, escaping gas, and human flesh sufficient to turn the stomach of a rag-picker. Alas ! In all the small towns of France there are physicians who drive their gig, rural notaries, judges of the peace and deputies in shoals who look back with regretful yearning upon that foul stench, who regret it, I assure you, as they breathe the cool air, at evening beneath the starry firmament, in the broad fields sweet with the perfume of new-mown hay. The reason ? It is mingled, this breath of pestilence, with what little poetry they have had in their lives, with their little student love-affairs, with their semblance of youth.

Still, it is a low-lived place, this Bullier's ; a caricature of the Alhambra in card-board ; an ocean of three or four thousand heads tossing among clouds of dust and tobacco smoke, and in front of the mad orchestra, which is playing a noisy quadrille, men and women twist and turn and kick up their heels with faces frightfully calm and gestures of obscene lunatics.

"What a crush !" says Amédée, already a little disgusted. "Let us go into the garden."

There they are blinded by the gas. The groves



AT BULLIER'S.

are like old theatrical scenery, and one might almost expect to see the yellow dragons of the old *opéras comiques* ; the grotto is cut out of cork-wood, and the fountain reminds one of those in shooting galleries, on top of which an egg-shell is balanced and keeps rising and falling. But for all that there is a breath of air to be had, and look ! up above there. How strange, among these artificial surroundings ! But yes, there in very truth the stars are shining.

"Waiter, two sodas," says Maurice, striking a table with his stick.

The two friends seat themselves at the side of an alley along which the crowd is passing and repassing. They have been sitting there ten minutes when two women stop in front of them.

"Good evening, Maurice," says the taller, a brunette with a voluminous corsage and very red cheeks, a regular type of the public-house attendant.

"Hallo, Margot," exclaims the young man. "Will you have something ? Sit down a moment, you and your friend. Do you know that she is charming, that friend of yours ? What is her name, that little sparrow there ?"

"Rosine," the sparrow replies, almost modestly. For it is not more than eighteen years old, and notwithstanding the blond frizzes over its eyes, the poor sparrow is not yet lost to shame. It is just making its *début*, that is easily seen.

"Well, Mademoiselle Rosine, come here, and let

us have a look at you," says Maurice, offering the young girl a seat beside him. "And you, Margot, I authorize you to be faithless to me once again in favor of your neighbor, my friend Amédée, who is suffering from love-sickness this evening just as if it was a raging tooth-ache. A heart to let. Lodgings by the night. . . . And although he is a poet, he happens to have money enough in his pocket to pay for your supper."

As at all times and in all places, the agreeable and selfish Maurice has taken for himself the lion's share, and Amédée, only listening with one ear to big Margot, who has taken a seat beside him and is already asking him to write her an acrostic, looks with an eye of favor upon little Rosine, to whom his elegant friend is retailing a hundred nothings in his low, musical voice. In spite of himself, however, the poet looks upon his friend as his superior, and regards it as quite a matter of course that the prettier of the two women should fall to his share. Never mind! Amédée, too, wishes to enjoy himself this evening; the blood seems to course through his veins like liquid fire. This Margot, who has taken off her glove to drink her glass of syrup, has red hands and apparently as much brains as a cabbage; but she is a handsome creature all the same. And the poet imitates his neighbor and begins to whisper soft things in the woman's ear, who bursts out laughing and looks at him with bold eyes.

The orchestra begins to thunder out a polka.

Maurice, raising his voice to make himself heard by his friend, addresses him several times by his Christian name, Amédée, and at last by his family name of Violette. Thereupon the pretty sparrow, little Rosine, gives a sudden start, looks at the poet and says to him in astonishment :

“What ! Your name is Amédée ? . . . Amédée Violette ?”

“There is no doubt about that.”

“Why, then . . . you are the person that I used to play with so often when I was a little girl.”

“With me ?”

“Yes. Don’t you remember ? Rosine, little Rosine Combarieu. . . . At Madame Gérard’s, the engraver’s wife, in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. What times we used to have, with her little girls ! How strange it is, the way people part and meet again !”

What are Amédée’s thoughts ? All his childhood brought before him at a glance, the name of the Gérard family mentioned in such a place, the bitter recollection that he has known this poor girl while she was still young and innocent ; all these things fill the heart of the young man with a singular feeling of melancholy ; all that he can say to Rosine, in a voice tremulous with pity, is :

“You ! . . . It was you !”

At this she blushes deeply and casts down her eyes in great embarrassment.

Maurice is not without tact. He perceives that Amédée and Rosine are laboring under a strong

emotion ; he feels that he is one too many there, so, rising suddenly :

“Come, Margot !” he exclaims with assumed gayety. “I think that these young people want to talk about the recollections of their childhood. Never mind your acrostic, my girl ; take my arm



and come and take a walk through the rooms. We will have a turn together when they play a waltz.”

When alone with Rosine, Amédée looks at her long and sadly. She is very pretty, in spite of her sallow complexion. She is the daughter of the faubourgs, with an innate genius for dress, making herself attractive with the merest trifle, a cotton dress and a flower in her hat, and sustaining life

on salads and all sorts of indigestible stuff so as to have money to buy nice shoes and eighteen button gloves.

The pretty blonde returns Amédée's glance, and a timid smile rises in her hazel eyes.

"Come, Monsieur Amédée," she says at length, "you must not let it pain you to find at Bullier's the little girl with whom you used to play at hide-and-seek behind father Gérard's furniture. You might have had cause for astonishment, truly, if you had found me grown up to be a respectable lady. I am not a good girl, it is true, but I work, and you must not think from seeing me here that I go with any one that chances to come along. Your friend may be a very good-looking fellow and very agreeable, but I only accepted his politeness because he knows Margot ; while with you the case is very different. It makes me very happy to have a talk with you ; it reminds me of mamma Gérard, who used to be so good to me. What has become of her, tell me ? . . . And her husband, and the girls ?"

"M. Gérard is dead," Amédée replies ; "but the ladies are well and I see them quite frequently."

"You won't tell them that you met me here, will you ? It will be better not to. If I had had a good mother, as those young ladies have, things would have turned out differently with me, but you remember, papa was entirely taken up with his politics. When I was fifteen he apprenticed me to a florist, and my mistress' lover, a monster of a

man, seduced me. . . . But let me tell you what a queer employment father Combarieu has now : he is manager of a Republican newspaper, and all he has to do is to go to prison for months at a time. . . . I am still in the flower business, and I had a young friend, a student at Val-de-Grace, but he has gone away to Algeria as surgeon to the troops. . . . It was very tiresome for me to be so much alone ; and to-night big Margot, whom I used to know at the shop, brought me here for a little amusement. But what are you doing ? Your friend said just now that you are a poet. You write songs, then ? I am just as fond of songs as ever. You remember when I used to play tunes with one finger on the Gérard's old piano ? . . . You were such a nice little boy then, as gentle as a girl. You still keep your kind blue eyes, although your complexion is brown ; I would know them anywhere. . . . You can't imagine what pleasure it gives me to see you again ! ”

She continues her chatter, bringing up recollections of old times, and whenever she mentions the Gérard ladies she does it with an air of respect that greatly pleases Amédée. He knows that she is a poor, reckless thing, whom a single kiss is sufficient to rob of all her prudence, but she has at least preserved that treasure of the poor, a simple heart. And then she is so cheerful withal. The young man submits himself to the soothing powers of her prattle, watches her graceful movements, calls up images of the past and is overcome by the

innocent tenderness of a rustic meeting a woman of his own country.

As the orchestra strikes up another quadrille with a vigor that reminds one of the storming of a fortification, and in a momentary silence on the part of Rosine :

“Do you know,” the poet tells her, “that you have grown to be very pretty ? What a beautiful complexion you have especially, Rosine ! What a charming pallor !”

But the grisette, who has had to endure much distress, answers bitterly :

“Oh, my pallor ! . . . That is nothing. . . . It is not the pallor of the rich.” Then all at once recovering her good-humor : “Tell me something, Monsieur Amédée. Did you really like Margot so very much that you had to begin to make love to her just now ?”

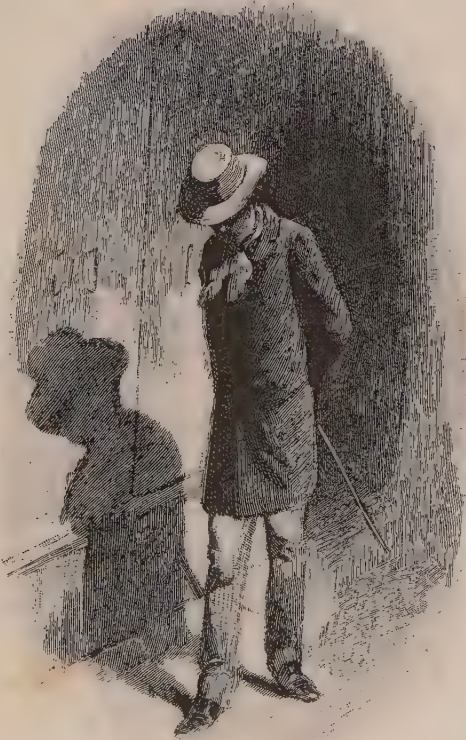
Amédée is vehement in his protestations. What ! that great thing ? Never ! never !

“See here, Rosine, I will confess that I came here for a little amusement ; that is not forbidden to a man of my age, is it ? But now this ball disgusts me. . . . You have no appointment ? You did not come here to meet any one ? . . . No ? . . . You are quite sure that you did not ? Well, take my arm and let us go. Do you live far from here ?”

“Avenue d’Orléans, near the church of Mont-rouge.”

“Let me see you home, will you ?”

She is quite willing, and arises to go. They



SECOND THOUGHTS.

leave the ball-room, and it seems to the poet that the girl's arm trembles as it rests on his, that he has made a conquest. Once out on the deserted boulevard, however, that lies bathed in the silvery moonshine, Rosine slackens her pace, becomes thoughtful and casts down her eyes when Amédée attempts to look into them in the darkness.

How sweet is the new-born desire that stirs the young man's heart ! There is a little sentiment mingled with it. His heart beats strong at the thought that he has but to say a word to enable him to pluck this tender blossom. Rosine is no less deeply moved. Neither of them can think of anything to say except the most trivial things.

“What a fine night !”

“Yes, the air is so pleasant, it does one good to breathe.”

They keep on their way without speaking. Oh ! the delightful coolness beneath the trees ! The voluptuous silence !

At last they reach the entrance of the house where Rosine lives. Slowly she raises her hand to the knob of the door-bell. Then Amédée, with a great effort, in a faint, thick voice, ventures to ask permission to go up-stairs with her, but she gives him a long look with an expression of mournful tenderness in her eyes, and says to him, very gently :

“Well, no ! not on any account. No ; we must be good. You like me this evening, and you can see very clearly that you are charming in my eyes ; I admit it ; it is true. We knew each other when

we were little things, we meet again, and it seems as if it would be a good thing that we should love each other, but believe me, we should be making a great mistake and it would not be quite right. Better not, I tell you. Forget the pretty sparrow, as your friend calls her, whom you met at Bullier's with big Margot, and remember only your little play-mate of the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. A pure memory that we can keep locked within the heart is worth more to us than a passing caprice. Let us not spoil the remembrance of our childhood, Monsieur Amédée, and let us part good friends."

Before the young man can find words to reply—and what answer could be framed in response to such delicacy of feeling?—the bell rings, Rosine gives Amédée a parting smile and a kiss from her finger-tips and quickly disappears within the door, which closes with a bang.

It is only natural that the poet feels a momentary impulse of anger. Feather-brain! Weather-cock of a woman! . . . But scarcely has he walked twenty steps along the avenue d'Orléans when he is saying to himself, almost remorsefully: "She is right." He reflects that this poor girl, fallen, alas! as she is, has preserved within some corner of her soul a lingering remnant of delicacy in which he himself has been found wanting, and although disappointed, the poet is yet glad that the sacred feeling of respect for woman has not been diminished in him by any act of hers.

Amédée, my boy, you are not adapted to go out and make a night of it, and your genius does not lie in the line of such brief love affairs ! Better give them up, my good fellow !



AT THE CAFÉ DE SEVILLE.

XII

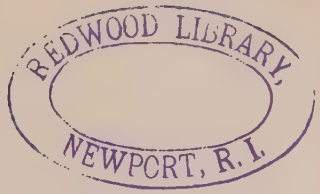
For a month past Amédée Violette's volume of poetry, entitled "Poems from Nature," had been adorning with its pale blue covers the shelves of the booksellers, and the excitement aroused at the *café de Seville* by the success of this work and the eulogistic articles that many of the newspapers had bestowed on it was not yet allayed. This excitement, be it understood, existed only among the Long-Hairs. The Beards did not bother their heads with such futilities ; the Beards, as is well known, considered poets and poetry beneath their notice.

These stern Beards, moreover, had affairs to regulate of quite a different degree of importance : upset the government, in the first place, and then reconstruct the map of Europe. To destroy the empire, what was needed ? First, to conspire, secondly, to build barricades. Nothing was more easy

than to conspire ; every one conspired at the "Seville." It is a characteristic of the Frenchman, inherently destructive, but frivolous and wanting in self-control, to conspire in public places. As soon as one of our compatriots has become affiliated with a secret society, he makes it his first business to hasten to his favorite place of resort and under the pledge of the strictest secrecy impart to intimate friends, whom he has known five minutes, the object of the conspiracy, the names of the conspirators, the place, day and hour of meeting, the pass-words and the rallying cries. Shortly after he has relieved his soul in this manner, he is surprised to see the police come in and squelch an enterprise that had been prepared with so much mystery and discretion. It was in this way that the Beards of the *café de Seville*, naturally enough, involved themselves in carbonarism. At absinthe time every one of the small tables had its own little group of Fieschi and Catilines. At "Number one of the Terrace," five old Beards who had grown white in political crime were pottering over an infernal machine, and in the rear room ten stout hands had sworn over the billiard-table that they would take up the sword for regicide. The only thing against them was that, as among so many Beards there were necessarily some false-beards, that is to say, spies, every plot hatched at the "Seville" had failed miserably.

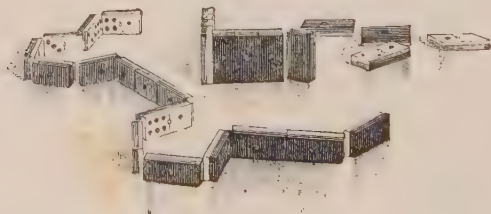
In this temple of anarchy, the art of making barricades was, as you may readily imagine, a study that was pursued with the greatest ardor and con-

scientiousness. This special branch of the science of fortification counted among its devotees more than one Vauban and more than one Gribeauval. "Professor of Barricades" was a title that was held in high esteem at the "Seville," and one that the fortunate possessor would gladly have had engraved on his visiting cards. And please take notice that the instruction was not confined to theory alone. Their regard for the police doubtless deterred the professors of the art from going out with the rioters of the future, who formed the base on which their system of instruction rested, and giving them practical lessons; the master or doctor of civil law, for instance, could not very well go out with them and tear up the pavement in the rue Drouot. But they had a resource, a way of getting around the difficulty. It was dominoes. No! You would hardly imagine what a revolutionary appearance those inoffensive mutton bones assumed in the seditious fingers of the frequenters of the *café de Seville*. Miniature paving stones, they represented on the marble tables reduced models of extremely complicated barricades, with bastions, curtains, redans and counterscarps of every description. It was something in the style of the little models of war-vessels that are to be seen in the museum of the department of the navy. Any one not in the secret would have thought that the Beards were playing a simple game of dominoes. No, no! Not a bit of it. They were pursuing a technical course of insurrection. When shouting



A GREAT POLITICIAN.

at the top of their voice : "Fives everywhere !" certain players seemed to be commanding a general discharge of artillery, and there was a way of saying "I can't" which was evidently expressive of the despair of a combatant who has fired his last cartridge. There was a Beard in spectacles and opera-hat, a Beard that must have made Xs and been refused at the *École Polytechnique* in youth, that was particularly terrible by reason of the rapidity and mathematical precision with which, in three minutes, it could arrange its dominoes and



draw its line of barricades. When that Beard laid its hand on sixes, you were transported in imagination to the *rue Transnonain*, or to the *Cloître-Saint-Merry*. It was dreadful !

As to foreign politics and the reconstruction of the map of Europe, that was, so to speak, only a relaxation, a recreation, for the Beards. It demanded the expense of a few packs of cards, that was all. Is it not nice, now, in arranging some clever combination of the cards in a game of piquet, to deliver unhappy Poland, and when one has the

satisfaction of marking the king and the vole at écarté, is that an expensive way of letting the Russians into Constantinople? Still, some of the Beards at the *café de Seville*, the most solemn of them, preferred to interest themselves in international questions, in the great problems of the European balance of power. One of these profound diplomatists—who probably had not the wherewithal to buy himself a pair of suspenders, for his shirt was always overflowing between his waistcoat and his trousers—was convinced that an indemnity of two milliards would be sufficient to induce the Pope to cede Rome to the Italians, and the specialty of another Metternich in miniature (who would have done better, perhaps, to buy himself a toothbrush) lay in giving serious warnings to England and threatening her with the loss of her East-Indian empire and other colonial possessions within a short space of time if she did not heed his advice.

The Beards, then, absorbed in such grave speculations, did not concern themselves in the slightest with that vanity which is denominated literature, and did not care for Amédée's book the value of a cherry-stone. Among the Long-Hairs, however, as we said before, the excitement was intense.

They were furious, the Long-Hairs were. They stirred, they stood on end. For the first enthusiasm excited by Amédée Violette's verse could have been, and had been, only a fire of straw. The Merovingians now displayed themselves in their true character toward a *confrère* who had been

guilty of success, that is, severe to the point of cruelty. What ! The first edition of *Poems from Nature* was exhausted and Massif was sending a second to the press ? What ! The *Bourgeois*, far from being "stunned," intimated that it was pleased with this book, bought it, read it, had it bound perhaps ? It was mentioned with favor in the *Bourgeois* newspapers, that is to say in those papers that had paying subscribers ? Was it not reported that Violette, egged-on by Jocquelet, had tackled a great comedy in verse and that the *Théâtre Français*, the theatre *par excellence* of the Bourgeois, had made very flattering advances to the poet ? But then, if he found so much favor in the eyes of the Bourgeois, he must be—oh ! horror !—a Bourgeois himself. That was as plain as a pike-staff. How could they have been so blind, they, the hairy poets, as not to have perceived it sooner ? When Amédée had formerly recited his poems to them at Sil- lery's, what mental aberration could have induced them to confound those platitudes with simplicity, that snivelling with true emotion, that uncouth construction with art ? Ah ! you might rest assured that they would not be caught again in that way !

So, the poets' tables in the *café de Scville* had for some time past been transformed into beds of torture, on which Amédée Violette's poems were stretched and bound every day from five o'clock until seven and subjected to the question extraordinary. Amiable Paul Sillery, a mocking smile upon his lips, sometimes tried to excite a little pity

for the verses of his friend, given over to such fierce tormentors, but literary executioners, when busied in tearing to pieces the book of a friend, are more pitiless than the Holy Office. There were two inquisitors, especially, more blood-thirsty than the rest ; first, the little wretch who demanded for his daily consumption all the houris of the Mussulman paradise, and then the big elegiac poet from the provinces, whose emotions were decidedly giving him a stomach, for he had been compelled only the other day to have his humble housekeeper move back the buckle of his trousers.

It must be understood that upon Amédée's appearance, the Long-Hairs immediately changed the subject of conversation and addressed themselves to commenting upon some insignificant piece of news in the evening paper, such, for instance, as the explosion of fire-damp that had just occurred in one of the mines of the department of the *Nord*, whereby eighty laborers had lost their lives, or the sinking of that trans-Atlantic steamer that had gone down with all hands, carrying with her a hundred and fifty passengers and her crew of forty men ; events of small importance, it must be confessed, when compared with the discovery recently made by these inquisitorial poets of two incorrect expressions and five halting rhymes in the work of their brother poet. Nevertheless Amédée, naturally sensitive, was quite well aware of the concealed hostility of which he was the ob-

ject in the clique of the Long-Hairs, and he only visited the *café de Seville* at infrequent intervals to shake hands with Paul Sillery, who, in spite of his ironical ways, had always proved himself a loyal and faithful friend.

There it was, however, that he met one evening his old school-mate of the *Lycée*, Arthur Papillon, who had carried off the first prize, seated at a table among the politicians. The poet asked himself in astonishment how it was that the handsome lawyer, so moderate in his opinions, chanced to be mixed up with such fiery revolutionists, and what common interest could have brought together that correct pair of side-whiskers and those thickets of unkempt hair. Papillon, however, as soon as he saw Amédée, left the group with which he was sitting, came over and warmly congratulated the author of *Poems from Nature*, drew him out upon the boulevard and there gave him the key to the mystery.

All the old parties were coalescing against the empire with a view to the approaching elections; Orleanists and republicans were hand and glove for the time being. He, Papillon, who had just submitted a brilliant thesis on receiving his degree of Doctor of Law, had espoused the cause of one of the wrecked fragments of the government of July, who, after having sulked in his tent since 1852, had finally consented to be the liberal opposition candidate for the department of *Seine-et-Oise*. Papillon was moving heaven and earth to insure his patron's success. He had just obtained assurance at the

“Seville” of the neutrality of the irreconcilable newspapers, and he was full of hope.

“Ah ! my dear fellow, what an up-hill job it is to fight the official candidate ! But the boss is a wonderful man. He travels third-class all day long on the railroads of his district, imparting his views to the peasants as the train rolls along and taking a fresh car at every station. What a stroke of genius ! The political meeting on wheels ! The idea came to him through his recollection of a harpist, who used to make the trip from Havre to Honfleur four times a day, playing *Il Baccio* all the time without cessation. . . . Ah ! we have to stir our stumps ; the Préfet does not hesitate at any means of opposing us. What did he do but disseminate in our most Catholic canton the calumny that we were Voltaireans, enemies of religion, devourers of the priests ! Luckily we have still four Sundays before the elections ! Between now and election day the boss will go and receive the communion at high mass in our four principal Catholic parishes. There is an answer for them ! If such a man is not elected, there is no hope for universal suffrage !”

In those days Amédée had not as yet seen so much to sicken him of politics as he has since. Still, however, he questioned within himself, with a feeling of distrust, whether this model candidate, who was perhaps about to give himself an indigestion with consecrated wafers and who went about unpacking his declarations of principles just as a peripatetic cutler displays his twelve-bladed pen-

knives, was not simply a stupendous fraud. Arthur Papillon, however, allowed him no time to indulge in these harrowing speculations.

“And yourself, little one, tell us how you are getting on,” says the lawyer with patronizing benignity. “You have been very successful, do you know it? The other evening, at the Countess Fontaine’s, . . . you know whom I mean? The daughter of *Maréchal* Lelièvre, the widow of Louis Philippe’s old minister, . . . Jocquelet recited for us your “Trenches before Sebastopol” with splendid effect. . . . What a voice that Jocquelet has! We have nothing like it at the Paris bar. . . . Lucky poet, I have seen your book lying about in the boudoir of more than one pretty woman! Come! I hope you will cut loose from the *café de Seville* and not waste your time among those unkempt heads. You must go into society; it is indispensable for a man of letters, and I will present you whenever you wish.”

Amédée is a little soured for the time being upon Bohemia, a country where he has enjoyed such a short-lived favor, and which, moreover, offends his delicacy in many different ways. Among other things, he does not look forward with pleasurable anticipation to having father Lebuffle address him some day as “thou.”

But to go into society! He has had so little training to fit him for it! Is it in his power to be presented and carry himself in a becoming manner? He asks the question of Papillon, with a



THINKING IT OVER.

feeling of timidity. The poet is proud, dreads ridicule, will never submit to be placed in a position of inferiority. His success, too, up to the present time, is altogether Platonic. He is still very poor and has not removed from the faubourg Saint-Jacques. In a few days Massif is to count him out five hundred francs for the second edition of his book, but what do a few napoleons amount to !

"It is quite sufficient," the lawyer replies, who proposes to make capital for himself out of his friend. "It is more than enough to buy yourself the necessary linen and a well-cut dress-coat. That is the main point. Good manners, you see, consist above all in knowing when to hold one's tongue. With your refinement and flexibility of character, you will appear like a perfect gentleman and then you are not a bad-looking fellow ; you have a pallor that is quite interesting. I am sure that people will take to you. We are now at the beginning of July, and Paris is almost empty, but the Countess Fontaine never goes away until vacation time on account of her grand-son, whose legal guardian she is and who is pursuing his studies at the *Lycée Bonaparte*. The countess' *salon* will be open every evening until the end of the month, and many distinguished persons are to be met with there, both those who have lingered in Paris and those who stop there for a day on their way to some resort. Madame Fontaine is an old woman of great amiability and great influence ; she likes authors, when they are presentable. Don't be

foolish, but go and order yourself a black coat. By presenting you there, my dear fellow, I am very likely assuring you an easy-chair at the Academy within fifteen years. . . . So, it is a bargain. Hold yourself in readiness for next week."

Attention ! Amédée Violette is about to make his bow before polite society.

Although his concierge, who has assisted him in putting the finishing touches to his toilet and has witnessed the ceremony of his investing himself in his white cravat, has just said to him : "What a love of a little bridegroom you make, Monsieur Amédée !" the poet's heart beats rapidly as the carriage in which he is seated beside Arthur Papillon creaks upon the gravel of the courtyard and draws up before the steps of the old *hôtel* in the rue de Bellechasse where Mme. la Comtesse Fontaine has her abode.

In the very vestibule, where he endeavors to imitate the imposing bearing of the lawyer and is in despair that he cannot master his manner of settling his shirt-front into his low-cut waistcoat, in the vestibule beneath the stern glances of four tall footmen in silk stockings, Amédée is as much disconcerted as if he were appearing before a council of revision in a state of nudity. But he is no doubt found "fit for service," for a door opens and displays to view a brightly lighted drawing-room ; he enters in the wake of Arthur Papillon, like a diminutive skiff in tow of a stately three-master, and behold the shrinking Amédée, a carpet beneath

his feet, a chandelier above his head, presented in due form to the mistress of the house.

She is a lady of elephantine proportions, in the flower of the sixties, noticeable for the white camellia fastened into her ebony-colored wig, and whose



face, arms and shoulders are powdered with flour sufficient to make a good-sized dish of apple-fritters. With all that, however, she has a very grand manner and splendid eyes, the commanding look

of which is tempered by a smile full of benignity, which has the effect of restoring some small degree of confidence to Amédée.

She says that she warmly applauded M. Violette's fine verses that Jocquelet recited at her last Wednesday of the season, and that she has just read, with the keenest enjoyment, the *Poems from Nature*. She thanks M. Papillon—who bows and drops his single eye-glass—for having brought to her M. Violette, whose acquaintance she is charmed to make.

Amédée is greatly embarrassed to find suitable words in which to reply to this compliment, common-place enough in itself, but uttered gracefully and with feeling. He is happily relieved from this duty by the arrival of a very bony and very dressy old lady, toward whom the countess rushes with a nimbleness that is quite surprising on the part of such a bulky person, exclaiming delightedly : “*Madame la Maréchale !*” and Amédée, still following in the wake of his friend, who steers a course toward a corner of the drawing-room and there comes to anchor in company with a whole flotilla of black coats, Amédée, whose wits are beginning to come back to him, takes a look about the place, so novel to him, to which his dawning reputation has gained him admission.

It is an immense *salon* in the style of the first Empire, with yellow hangings and furniture, and the tall white panels of which are decorated with trophies of ancient armor in carved and gilded wood. A hyper-critic from the *École des Beaux-*

Arts would certainly brand with some disparaging epithet the easy-chairs and sofas, with their ornamentation of sphinx's heads in bronze, as well as the heavy clock in green marble, upon the top of which stands a golden personage with short side-whiskers, scantily clad in a helmet, a sword and a vine-leaf, who seems to be making love to a young lady in a flying tunic with her waist just under her breasts and wearing her hair just exactly like the Empress Josephine. The critic would be wrong, however, for the massive luxury of the apartment is wanting neither in grandeur nor in character. There are only two pictures to impart a little warmth to the coldness of the walls. One, bearing the signature of Gros, is the equestrian portrait of the Countess Fontaine's father, the glorious Marshal Lelièvre, Duke of Eylau, the drummer-boy of the bridge of Lodi and one of Napoleon's most intrepid lieutenants. He is depicted in full uniform, surmounted by an enormous hat with white plumes, brandishing his blue velvet baton sprinkled with golden bees ; and beneath the belly of his rearing charger, in the remote distance, confused glimpses are caught of a great battle in the snow and the mouths of cannon vomiting flame. The other picture, standing on an easel and illuminated by a reflecting lamp, is a master-piece of Ingres, a delicious medallion of a young girl ; it is the portrait of the mistress of the house at the age of eighteen, a portrait of which the Countess Fontaine offers in these later days only an old and monstrous caricature.

Arthur Papillon, conversing with Amédée in subdued tones, explains to him how it is that Mme. Fontaine's *salon* is neutral ground, open to people of all parties. Daughter of a marshal of the first Empire, the countess preserves the most intimate relations with the world of the Tuileries, although she is the widow of Count Fontaine, one of the *doctrinaires* hatched out under the auspices of Royer Collard, a parliamentarian who was ennobled by Louis Philippe, twice the colleague of Guizot on the ministerial benches, who died of spite and disappointed ambition after 1848 and the *coup d'état*. The countess' brother, moreover, the present Duke of Eylau, married in 1829 one of the most noble heiresses of the faubourg Saint-Germain, a Croix-Saint-Jean ; for his father the marshal, whose character was not on a par with his bravery, had rallied to the support of all governments in turn, and had carried his wax-candle in the religious processions of Charles X. before ending his career as governor of the Invalides at the beginning of the monarchy of July. Thanks to this series of combinations, several great noblemen, many Orleanists, a certain number of official personages and even a few well-bred republicans are to be met with in this *salon* of liberal tendencies, to which the countess, an admirable hostess, has the tact to attract *savans*, authors, artists, notabilities of all sorts, and also young and pretty women.

On account of the lateness of the season, there were not many people that evening at the Countess

Fontaine's. Passing over the gentlemen of no importance, whose ancestors were perhaps manufactured to order by father Issachar, Papillon points out to his friend a few celebrities.



Here, in the first place, with the star of the Legion of Honor fastened upon a coat which looks as if it had come from the shop of the old-clothes man, is Forgerol, the great geologist, most intrigu-

ing and most avaricious of men of science, Forgerol, who has enriched himself with twenty fat sinecures and for whom one of his colleagues of the Institute has composed this epitaph in advance : " Here lies Forgerol, in the only place that he never asked for."

That grand old man with venerable and shaking head, whose white and silky hair seems to shed benefits and benedictions, is M. Dussaut du Fossé, professional philanthropist, president of many charitable associations, senator, as a matter of course, since he has been peer of France, and who, a few years hence, after the Prussians and the earthquake, will go to smash in some very questionable transactions and end his career in a police court.

A pedant from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, his neck wrapped in a voluminous cravat and leaning in his favorite attitude against the chimney of the *salon*, which at this season of the year is filled with flowers at which he is probably endeavoring to perfume his calves, this old statesman, whose coarse gray hair is like a mop to clear away spider's webs, and who, by his mulish obstinacy, largely contributed to the fall of the last monarchy, is respectfully listened to by a republican orator, whose red convictions are beginning to lose color, and who, as minister of the liberalized empire, will presently be doing his best to hasten the ruin of the government.

Although Amédée has not reached the age when one ceases to be capable of feeling respect, these

notabilities, whose names are uttered by Papillon with every mark of respect, do not produce so deep an impression upon the poet as certain visitors belonging to the world of art and letters. As he watches them, however, the young man is surprised and even a little saddened by the lack of accord that he often discovers between the physiognomy of the man and the nature of his talent. The poet Leroy des Saules, indeed, has the lofty bearing and the Apollonian countenance corresponding to the noble and perfect beauty of his verse; but Edouard Durocher, the Veronese of the nineteenth century, the painter of luxury and joy, is a very ordinary looking man, wearing drooping mustaches, like a leader of the *claque*, and Théophile de Sonis, the fashionable novelist, has the copper nose and the rough beard of an old captain in the revenue service.

But what particularly attracts and engrosses Amédée's attention is the women, the women of society, whom he now for the first time has an opportunity of beholding close at hand. Some of them are old and horrible objects to look at. Their weary, fagged-out air, their sunken eyes, their equine profiles and their long, pendulous lips like those of a dromedary are all accentuated and made more prominent by the jewelry with which they are loaded down, and their low-necked dresses—it is etiquette to appear in full-dress at Mme. Fontaine's receptions—which permit glimpses beneath the lace of flabby embonpoint or bony lean-

ness, are as ridiculous as a natty blue hussar's dolman would be on the back of an old bald-headed colonel with a corporation. In presence of these painted specimens of antiquity, the young man feels with affright the reverence due to age slipping away from him. He will only look upon the young and pretty women, those whose bust emerges from their corsage blooming like a flower, who have a smile of triumph on their lips, flowers in their hair and diamonds about their neck. All this unclad flesh frightens him, and Amédée, who has grown up in the midst of the small *bourgeoisie* of Paris, reserved and puritanical in its nature, is embarrassed almost to the point of dropping his eyes in the presence of such an array of arms, necks and shoulders. He suddenly thinks of Maria Gérard as he met her the other day going to her work at the Louvre, so neat and fresh in her dark, high-necked dress, her magnificent hair escaping from beneath her close-fitting hood and her box of pastels in her hand. Alas! why can she not love him? How infinitely he would prefer that simple rose concealed among the thorns to all these full-blown peonies, and what a divine charm resides in modesty!

The corpulent and kind-hearted countess returns to the poet, and to his great confusion requests him to recite some of his poetry. He is forced to bow to his sentence; it is now his turn to place his back to the chimney and perfume his calves. Fortunately he scores another success. All the peonies

in low-necked dresses, who do not understand very much of his poetry, but who think that this dark, blue-eyed man with his earnest, melancholy expression is a very pretty fellow, applaud as vigorously as their tight gloves will allow them to. They flock around him and congratulate him. Mme. Fontaine introduces him to Leroy des Saules, the celebrated poet, who felicitates him in proper terms and paternally invites him to come and see him; and it would be a delightful moment for Amédée if one of the camel-lipped old ladies, whose stockings are probably as blue as her eye-lids, did not monopolize him for a quarter of an hour and compel him to undergo a kind of bachelor's examination upon contemporary poetry.

At last the poet takes his leave and withdraws, ballasted with a cup of tea and an invitation to dine on the following Tuesday, and when he is in the cab with Arthur Papillon, the latter gives him a resounding slap on the thigh with his open hand and joyfully exclaims :

“Well, you have come out !”

He has “come out,” in very truth, and I can tell you that he will wear out more than one black coat before he learns how much wasted time and futile running to and fro this habit of “going into society,” a habit which at the first glance seems to amount to nothing and which in fact does amount to nothing, costs an artist, a man who works for a living.

He has come out ! And he begins well. On Tuesday next, at Mme. Fontaine's, who eats scarcely

anything and drinks nothing but water, a suspicious salmon and abominable wines will be served to Amédée by a butler named Adolphe, who ought rather to be addressed as Exili or Castaing, and who, after fifteen years at the utmost of service with the countess, already owns in Paris two five-story houses, advantageously rented. For the present, everything is all right; Amédée has the stomach of a young fellow of twenty and could digest the buttons off Adolphe's uniform, but all the Borgias in black silk stockings and white cotton gloves who are desirous of becoming owners of real estate will concoct dishes for him, each after his kind, and when he shall have partaken of them two or three times a week for half a dozen winters, I should like to hear something about his dyspepsia. If there was only a little amusement in that dinner of Tuesday next! Let us see how it will go off. With the appearance of the doubtful salmon, the statesman with the head of hair like a mop, he who, without suspecting it, struck down poor Louis Philippe, will begin a monologue to explain how, if his advice had only been listened to, that constitutional king would still be on the throne, and at the instant when the poisoner shall pour into the glasses his most deadly Pomard, the old lady who resembles a dromedary with ear-rings will subject Amédée, her unfortunate neighbor, to a fresh oral examination upon the poets of the nineteenth century, and will ask him—pleasing questions for a brother poet—what he thinks of Lamartine's debts, of Vic-

tor Hugo's insane pride and the intemperate habits of Alfred de Musset.

So Amédée has "come out," the good fellow! He will pay his digestive calls after his dinner parties and will show himself at Madame So-and-So's on her "day," and at several other Madame So-and-So's as well. At first he will remain half an hour, until he perceives that the knowing ones only come in and go out, exactly as people do in the booth of the woman giant in ginger-bread fair. He will see pass before him, shielded this time, however, in satin and velvet, all the bosoms and all the shoulders of his acquaintance, those from which he turns away in disgust and those which bring the blushes to his cheek, and every Madame So-and-So, as she enters the drawing-room of another Madame So-and-So and seats herself on the edge of a *pouf* or an easy-chair, will say the same thing, always the same thing, the thing that is fated to be said, the only thing than can or should be said to begin a conversation on that particular day; as for instance: "So the poor general is dead!" or else: "Have you seen the new piece at the *Français*? . . . It does not amount to much, but how well it is acted!" It is delightful! Amédée will be struck with especial admiration by the nobility of expression of the Madame So-and-So whose "day" it is. When Madame A. tells her that Mme. B. is about to marry her daughter to the nephew of Mme. C., the mistress of the house, though scarcely acquainted with the people, will

manifest as great delight as if she were told of the death of that old aunt of hers whose money she is waiting for to refurnish her hôtel, and on the other hand, when Mme. D. tells her that Mme. E.'s little boy has the whooping-cough, like a flash, by an immediate transition and a change of countenance that would make the fortune of an actress, the lady who is receiving will assume a more woe-begone expression than if she had been told that all the harvests had been killed by frost or that the cholera had broken out the day before in the quarter of the Halles.

Amédée has come out, I tell you. Somewhat unsophisticated still, even as we behold him now, for some time to come he will be the dupe of all those shams, all those grimaces, all that false hair, all those false smiles that disclose so many false teeth. To the casual observer, is not everything here elegance, harmony, refinement? Since Amédée is not aware that the famous hair of the Princess Krazinska has been shorn from the heads of three Breton peasant girls at the last *pardon* of *Saint-Jean-du-Doigt*, what could induce him to suspect that austere Master Lemarguillier, the ecclesiastical lawyer, has been seriously implicated in an offence against morality and has had to throw himself at the feet of the Prefect of Police, exclaiming: "Do not ruin me!" just as they do in melodrama? When the king of fashion is announced, the young Duke de la Tour-Prends-Garde, one of whose ancestors was at the bridge

of Taillebourg and who is just now devoting his energies to bringing out a new style of trousers, Amédée would never believe, would he? that the favorite pleasure of this refined gentleman consists in "killing the worm" of a morning, throwing dice with his coachman at the little wine-shop on the corner; and when pretty Baronne des Nénuphars blushes up to her eyes because the word "tea-spoon" has been uttered in her presence and she discovers in it, no one knows why, something intolerably indecent, our young friend would certainly be the very last one to guess that this modest young person has just secretly sold the family jewels, which she had no right to dispose of, in order to pay the debts of her third lover.

Never fear, Amédée will part with his illusions in the end. A day will come when he will no longer look with serious eyes upon the great comedy in white cravat. But be assured on the other hand that his indignation will not be tinged with bad taste. No! it will be rather a feeling of commiseration that he will experience for these unfortunate society folks, condemned to a life of hypocrisy and falsehood. As he thinks of the frightful *ennui* by which they are devoured, he will even find excuses for their faults and their vices. Yes! he will understand that a poor fellow like the Duke de la Tour-Prends-Garde, who is compelled to listen to *la Favorita* seventeen times in the course of a winter, now and then feels the need of a more exciting amusement and goes and

drinks white wine over the counter with his servant. It is understood that Amédée is to be extremely indulgent, only it will be necessary to overlook in him as well his plebeian nature, his inherent vulgarity, for when he has once fathomed the void and the vanity of the farce that is called society, all his sympathies will be with plain people, with those who are in close contact with nature. Heavens, yes ! He will hold the lowest of working-men, a wood-sawyer or a bell-hanger, in infinitely higher respect than a parlor politician, standing and speechifying by the mantel-piece ; and he will prefer the old village grand-mother, who makes no attempt to hide the wrinkles beneath her white cap and at the age of seventy five still goes out to till her little potato-patch, to the literary old lady, glittering like a shop-window in the Palais-Royal and tattooed like a Caribbee Indian.

XIII

A LITTLE more than a year has passed. It is early October, and when the morning mists have vanished the sky is of such a deep, clear blue and the breezes are so pure and cool that Amédée Violette, remembering that he is an old-time boy of Paris, is sometimes tempted to make himself a kite and go and fly it upon the slope of the fortifications.

He is too old for that now, however. The kite that Amédée Violette flies is more frail than if it were made of osier twigs and old papers pasted together ; it does not rise very high in the air as yet and the cord that holds it is not very strong. Amédée's kite is his dawning reputation as a poet. It must be kept aloft, it is incumbent on him to work. And still with a vague and secret hope of gaining little Maria's love, Amédée keeps on working.

Besides, he is not so poor as he was. He is get-

ting two hundred francs a month now for his work at the ministry, and now and then he publishes a novel in prose in newspapers which pay him for his "copy." So he has left his garret in the faubourg Saint-Jacques where he used to rhyme and occupies in the île Saint-Louis a single, but large and well lighted room, from which, whenever he looks from his window, he can see the boats plying on the river and the sun setting behind Notre-Dame.

Amédée has bestowed most of his labor this summer upon his play for the *Comédie Française*, and he has just finished it. It is a modern drama in verse, entitled *l'Atelier*. The action, very simple, as the action of a tragedy should be, but which he considers touching and pathetic, is developed among the laboring classes, and Amédée is in hopes that he has hit upon a versification for his dialogue that is familiar and still poetic, in which he has not been afraid to introduce certain picturesque words, certain energetic forms of speech in use among working-men.

The grateful poet intends the principal rôle of his piece for Jocquelet, who made a triumphant début last year in Molière's *les Fourberies de Scapin* and has ever since been heaping up successes; for Jocquelet, who, like all comic actors, has an idea that he can also play in serious drama, and so he can, in fact, but only under exceptional conditions: for in spite of his preposterous nose, he has real qualities of strength and fire and a knack of reciting poetry. The character that he is to assume

in his friend's work is that of an old engineer, the pride of his shop, a sort of Nestor of the faubourg, and this type goes very well with Jocquelet's unaristocratic countenance, who, moreover, has already demonstrated his ability to take old men's parts.

And yet the actor was not satisfied at first. He, too, cherishes the dream, at once monstrous and shapeless, of all players; he wants, just like the rest of them, what they call a "fine leading rôle." Let us say that they do not know exactly what they mean by this expression, but in their foggy imagination is an undefined sketch of some prodigious Almanzor, who makes his first entrée in an open carriage with four horses and gets out of it adorned with tight gray pantaloons and top-boots, with a string of orders on the breast of his coat. This personage, as seductive as Don Juan, as brave as Murat, as poetical as Shakespeare and as charitable as Saint Vincent de Paul, before the end of the first act should, by a single look, have made the young leading lady head over heels in love with him, dispersed twelve bullies by the mere wind of his sword, addressed to the stars, that is to say, to the spectators in the third gallery, a harangue of eighty to a hundred lines and gathered up two abandoned children in the skirt of his mantle.

The "fine leading rôle," as the action of the piece proceeds, should perform a certain number of lofty deeds, harangue the multitude from the top of a practicable stair-case, insult a powerful monarch to his face and throw himself, still in top-

boots, into the flames of a conflagration. His ideal would be, successively, to discover America



like Christopher Columbus, gain pitched battles
like Bonaparte and die on the cross like Jesus

Christ. The main point, however, is that he is hardly ever to leave the stage, that he is to talk all the time and that the piece is to be a sort of monologue in five acts.

The part of an old working-man, therefore, that Amédée offered to Jocquelet was received by the latter at the first reading with a grimace of displeasure. The actor finally became reconciled to the character, however, studied it, "dug it out," to make use of his own expression, and one day he came hurriedly to Violette's apartment, quite warmed up.

"I think that I see now what to do with my man," he exclaimed. "I will dress him in a ragged knitted waistcoat with sleeves and a very dirty blue apron. He is a hairy old fellow, is he not? Well, in the great scene of the third act, when he is told that his son is a thief and he wants to fight the whole shop, he will struggle, his clothing will be disordered and his shirt will come open, and, as I am not hairy myself, I will fasten some gray wool upon my chest. You will see what an effect that will produce!"

While awaiting a more opportune occasion of dissuading Jocquelet from ornamenting his person in this manner, Amédée took his manuscript to the director of the Théâtre-Français, who requested time to give it a leisurely examination and promised that he would let the young poet know whether or not he would take it upon himself to read it to the committee. Amédée, consequently, is on

pins and needles, although Maurice Roger, to whom the work has been read act by act, predicts for it an enthusiastic reception.

Handsome Maurice has been installed for a year past in an atelier of the rue d'Assas, where he leads a gay and joyous life. Does he work? Sometimes, when the fit takes him, voluptuary that he is; and although the few sketches hanging from his walls are only half finished and have evidently been thrown aside whenever the painter was attacked by a fit of laziness, they still display considerable merit. Once again they betray the ardent young man's sole preoccupation: women, always women! Not in a state of complete nudity, where there is no indecency, as the laborious apprentice to art endeavors to depict them, faithfully, conscientiously, with all their defects, their blemishes even. On the contrary, when looking at Maurice's studies, one feels that he has looked upon all his models with the eye of desire. His libertine brush only pictures woman in a provoking half-clothed condition, ready for love. If he is to display his talent some day, he will excel in depicting the disorder of a night toilet upon a young bosom, he will be a modern Fragonard.

In the meantime, one of the great pleasures of his profession to this sensual Maurice is to pass in review before him all the handsome forms that pose at ten francs a sitting. He cares for none of those girls, he has become more fastidious; when they disrobe, he even has hard work to conceal his look of

disgust at the sight of their run-down shoes and old corsets of gray cotton. What suffices him and pleases him is to have there by him that half-clothed form, that human flesh. Holding his palette on his thumb, he chats with the young woman, tells her amusing stories, makes her tell him of her small cares and pleasures, her lowly loves. When friends come to see him—and some of them are coming constantly—they always catch a glimpse on entering of the model skipping away to hide behind a curtain, holding between her teeth her chemise that she has slipped on in haste, but the young lady is recalled, she appears forthwith, often without even putting on her petticoat, and she commences to prattle and smoke Turkish cigarettes with the young men. Amédée, who is always a little embarrassed when the model in chemise asks him for a light, generally passes his Sunday afternoons with Maurice.

He meets Arthur Papillon there, who is preparing for his political career by acting as counsel for the defence in newspaper trials. Although he is fundamentally only a very moderate liberal, the young man with correct side-whiskers undertakes to defend the most republican Beards, if, however, that can be called defending them: for thanks to the violent attacks on government that the handsome lawyer always introduces in his addresses, his clients regularly receive the extreme sentence of the law. That affords them great pleasure, however; for among the irreconcilables the fact that one has been condemned for political reasons af-

fords a title of great distinction, and one moreover that is so easily acquired. They are all convinced that the time is ripe and that they are on the point of overturning the empire, without a suspicion, alas ! that to effect that end twelve hundred thousand Prussian bayonets will be required. On the day of triumph, no doubt, their months of imprisonment will be credited in their favor, and Saint-Pélagie is by no means such a bad place. Papillon, who is a knowing fellow and wants to have as many strings to his bow as possible, breakfasts once a week with those who are indebted to him for their sojourn in this comfortable jail, and always brings a lobster as his contribution to the feast.

Paul Sillery, who has made Maurice's acquaintance, also makes a lounging place of his studio. The kindly Bohemian has not yet paid his bill at Father Lebuffle's, but he has had his red hair cut short and publishes every Saturday in a fashionable journal graceful chronicles abounding in wit and fancy. As a matter of course, he has never been forgiven at the *café de Seville*. The Long-Hairs have denied this traitor who has also gone over to the enemy and is now only a troublesome, unsavory bourgeois ; and if the poetical inquisition could carry its sentences into effect, Paul Sillery, like a relapsed Jew, would forthwith be clad in a *san-benito*, soundly flogged and burned alive. But Paul Sillery does not care a button for the whole of them. The brazen-faced fellow even visits the "Seville" now and then and treats the members of the holy-office

to a round of drinks, which he pays for with the money of his shame.

Sometimes, too, Jocquelet shows his clean-shaved face in Maurice's rooms, but the actor is not a frequent visitor. He is a very busy man now and has already acquired celebrity. In the windows of the photographers his obtrusive nose, reproduced in every position, full-face, three-quarters or profile, is displayed in company with the favorite portraits of the day, Pope Pius IX. with his paternal, venerable face, for instance, or the international legs of Mlle. Ketty, the majestic fairy who appears in tights on the boards of the Châtelet. Every day Jocquelet's name appears in the newspapers ; they mention him as a sympathetic actor of eminence and cannot say enough in his praise. They glorify his generosity and goodness of heart, and relate touching anecdotes about him. He is good to his old aunt, his charities are profuse, he picked up a stray dog the other evening. An artist such as he is, who preserves the entire comic repertory from oblivion and is a personal protector of Molière, has no time, as may be imagined, for calling on his friends. Nevertheless he honors Maurice with an occasional short visit. He remains only long enough to make the ornamental knick-knacks on the dressing-table tremble at the sound of his terrible voice, and to tell how, the night before, in the green-room of the Français, while still arrayed in the striped mantle of Scapin, he condescended to receive with the most dignified coldness the compliments of a

Royal Highness, or how a lady of the highest social position, "Yes, my dear boys, one of the four hundred," has been dying for love of him for the last six months in *baignoire* number six, on the side next the garden—and he is off. Good riddance !

Amédée takes pleasure in these visits to the studio of the amateur, where bright and companionable artists resort for conversation. There is a great deal of laughter and amusement, and these Sunday calls are the most agreeable of the hard-working poet's recreations. Amédée stays as long as possible, at last is left alone with his friend, and then the two young fellows, reclining upon the cushions of the Turkish divan, converse unrestrainedly upon their wishes, their ambitions and their dreams of the future.

Amédée has one secret, however, that he keeps from Maurice ; he has never told him that he is in love with Maria Gérard. On his return from Italy, the traveller inquired several times about those ladies, politely commiserated their misfortunes and desired to be remembered to them by Violette, but the latter having infused into his answers an excessive reserve, Maurice has not since renewed that subject of conversation. Is it by reason of forgetfulness ? After all, he knows but very little of the Gérard ladies. Amédée does not regret, however, that he no longer has to talk with his friend about them, and it is never without a slight feeling of embarrassment, of unconfessed jealousy, that he replies to pretty Maria when she asks him for news of Maurice.

But she never asks this question now ; pretty Maria is sad, silent and spiritless, for at the Gérards there is now only one subject of conversation, always the same, never varying, the vulgar and cruel care of keeping body and soul together, for in these latter days they have descended the slippery stair-case of want by a few steps further. It is not possible with piano lessons and a box of pastels to earn sufficient to feed three mouths. Louise has lost some of her pupils, father Issachar has reduced his orders and mother Gérard, who is getting to be an old woman, in vain redoubles her efforts, they do not succeed in making the two ends meet. Amédée has noticed it, and what suffering it causes him ! The poor women are proud and make as little complaint as possible, but many things bear witness to the waning fortunes of their home, humble as it was already. Two handsome engravings, the last souvenirs of the dead father, have gone to the sales-room in an hour of extreme need, and the paper, less soiled in the place which they occupied upon the wall, seems to retain a shade, a spectre of the pictures that have disappeared. The mourning of mamma Gérard and her daughters is beginning to assume a rusty look, and for the Sunday dinners, to which Amédée, in place of the traditional cake, now brings a pâté which sometimes constitutes the entire meal, there is no longer left a single bottle of old wine in the cellar and they drink stuff which they buy from the grocer by the quart. Each fresh detail which

demonstrates to him the constantly increasing distress of his old friends imparts an additional pang to Amédée's feeling heart. On one occasion, having received ten louis, the product of some literary work, he took the poor mother aside and forced her to accept a hundred francs, and the poor old woman, trembling with emotion and with two big tears standing in her eyes, confessed to him that they had pawned the only clock in their rooms the day before to get money with which to pay the laundress.

What is to be done to extricate them from their difficulties and create for them a more endurable existence? Ah! if Maria would only consent! They would marry at once, as poor people do, without other expense than a white dress, and then they could all live together. He has his salary, twenty four hundred francs a year, besides a thousand francs of savings that he has picked up here and there. With Louise's lessons, they would have a small assured income that would almost suffice for their needs, and then he would exert himself to place more "copy," he would work hard; they would get along. There was no doubt that it would be a serious matter for him to take this whole family on his shoulders; children might be born to him; but had he not his rising reputation, was there not a promising future before him? His piece might be acted and prove a success; that would be their salvation. Oh! how pleasant life might be for the four of them beside their own small, loved fireside!

Yes, if Maria loves him a little, as he cannot help thinking that she does, if she can only muster up courage, it is the only thing to do.

His mind once made up on this project, Amédée decides to submit it to the excellent Louise, in whom he has full confidence, whom he looks upon as the embodiment of goodness and reason. At six o'clock every Tuesday afternoon she leaves a young ladies' school in the rue Rochechouart, where she gives lessons. He goes to wait for her there one afternoon, and watches for her to come forth from the school. Here she comes, at last. Poor Louise ! her dress is pitiful, and how badly she looks ! What an air of melancholy and weariness !

"You, Amédée !" she says with a happy smile, as he advances to meet her.

"Yes, dear Louise. Take my arm and let me walk with you a little way. We can talk as we go along. I have a serious confidence to impart to you, and I want to ask your advice upon an important subject."

And the poet begins his confession. He reminds her of their childhood and how they all used to play together in old times, down there in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. It was even in those remote days that he first felt little Maria's charm. When he had grown to be a young man, he felt that he loved the dear child. He has always cherished the hope that he might inspire her with a tender sentiment, that he might marry her some day. If he has not declared himself sooner, the reason was

that he was too poor, but he has loved her always, he loves her now and he will never love any one but her. Then he lays before Louise his plan for living in simple and touching terms. He would be a son to Mme. Gérard, a brother to his dear Louise, and the union of their poverty would be almost affluence. Is it not quite simple? Is it not very reasonable? He is very sure that she will approve of it, she who is wisdom itself, the brains of the family.

But while he is speaking, Louise casts down her eyes and looks upon the ground, and he fails to notice that she is trembling violently. Blind, blind Amédée ! You do not see it, you will never see it, but she it is who loves you. Oh ! hopeless ! She knows that she is older than you, that she is not pretty, that she will always be in your eyes an older adoptive sister, who in by-gone days used to point out the letters of the alphabet to you with her knitting-needle. A long time ago she divined your love for Maria ; she has suffered from it, she is resigned to it, she would be glad to assist it, the brave girl ! But this avowal that you confide to her, the name of Maria murmured in her ear in such passionate accents, this dream of happiness where, in your innocent selfishness, you only reserve and predict for her the rôle of an old maid who will bring up your children, little better than a servant, how cruel it is, ah ! how cruel !

They have reached the boulevard Pigalle. The sun has already set, the clear, pure sky is of a blue

like turquoise and the keen evening wind sweeps from the stunted trees the last leaves of the Parisian autumn, leaves that are dry and eaten by the dust.

Amédée is silent. His anxious look solicits and awaits a reply from Louise.

"Dear Amédée," she says, looking at him out of her kind, frank eyes, "you have the best and the most generous heart. . . . I suspected that you were in love with Maria, and it would give me pleasure to tell you at once that she loves you too, that it is all settled, that you and we shall all live together henceforth and make but one single family, but sincerely, I cannot. Although the dear child is a little frivolous, her woman's instinct should have apprised her of your feeling toward her, and yet she has never spoken a word of it, either to mamma or to me. Do not let that trouble you, however; I do not see in it anything of bad augury for you. She is so young and so innocent that she may love you without being aware of it herself. It is very possible, even probable, that your declaration may be the means of enlightening her as to the state of her own heart. She will be touched, I am sure, by your love, as much as by the kindness you manifest toward our family. . . . With all my heart, Amédée, I wish that you may be successful, for, I may say to you, something must be done to yield our dear Maria a little happiness, and that quickly. I have been worried about her for some time past. She has moments of deep sadness, and

fits of weeping. You, too, must have noticed that she is suffering terribly from ennui. Is it not easy of explanation? To feel the consciousness of being pretty, seductive, formed for a life of happiness, as she is, and to see the present and the future so dark before her! How distressing it must be! . . . You understand then, my friend, how desirous I am that this marriage should take place. With your gentleness and kindness of heart, you would make our Maria so happy! As you have said, however, it is I who represent the prudence of the family. Let me have a few days, then, to watch Maria, to try to gain her confidence, and perhaps arouse in her a sentiment of the existence of which she is unaware, and believe that you have in me the most reliable and the most faithful of allies."

"Take your time, dear Louise," the poet replies. "I place myself in your hands. Whatever you do will be well done."

He thanks her, and when they part at the foot of the rue Lepic, it is with a bitter pleasure that the poor rejected girl gives the young man her hand that is deformed through much piano playing, in its dyed glove that is too large for it, and feels him press it with gratitude and hope.

She wishes to effect this marriage. She feels that she must effect it. She says this to herself, and keeps repeating it as she climbs the steep street where the people are swarming in the twilight in the stir and bustle that accompanies the

close of day. No, Louise is quite certain that Maria does not care for Amédée, but cost what it may, she must remove her young sister from the discouragements and the evil counsels of poverty. Amédée loves Maria and will succeed in making himself loved by her; the two young lives must be brought together and their happiness assured. As for herself, what does it matter? If they have children, she will cheerfully accept her duties as maiden aunt and god-mother. If Maria will only listen to the dictates of her heart, if she will only consent! She is so pretty that she is somewhat vain. She may be cherishing some vague dream, some wild anticipation of the future, no one knows what, founded on her twenty years and her beauty. It is a great anxiety for Louise. The poor girl, her emaciated shoulders bowed beneath her black shawl, already forgetful of her own griefs and thoughtful only for the welfare of others, laboriously ascends the hill of Montmartre, but when she reaches the butcher's shop near the mayor's office, she remembers a commission that her mother gave her in the morning, and as some trivial detail must always intrude itself upon the drama of life among the poor, Louise, without abandoning the thread of her reflections, enters the shop, selects two breaded cutlets from the tin box for their evening meal and has them wrapped up in paper.

The day succeeding his conversation with Louise, Amédée felt that almost painful impatience which

anticipation gives rise to in nervous people. His day at the office seemed interminable, and not caring to encounter the solitude of his room, at five o'clock he went to call on Maurice, whom he had not seen for two weeks and whom he found alone in his studio.

The young artist seemed to be troubled by some care of his own, and while Amédée was congratulating him upon a study that stood on the easel, Maurice, with eyes cast down and hands plunged deep into the pockets of his red jacket, paced to and fro the studio without replying to the compliments of his friend. He came to a sudden halt, and looking Amédée in the face :

"You have not seen the Gérard ladies of late?" he asked.

For several months Maurice had not mentioned the names of those ladies, and the poet was somewhat surprised by his question.

"Yes," he replied ; " I met Mlle. Louise no longer ago than yesterday."

"And . . ." Maurice continued hesitatingly, "the family is all well?"

"Why, yes."

"Ah!" ejaculated the artist in a strange voice. And he resumed his silent promenade.

Amédée never heard the name of the Gérard ladies uttered by Maurice without experiencing a rather disagreeable feeling. On this occasion, however, the equivocal expression of countenance, the singular tone of the young painter as he inquired

after them, caused the poet a feeling of real uneasiness. He was particularly impressed by Maurice's exclamation, by that simple "Ah," in which there seemed to him to be something mysterious and enigmatical. But what was he thinking of? His fears were without common-sense, and his friend's questions were quite natural.

"Shall we pass the evening together, my dear Maurice?"

"Impossible this evening," the artist replied, still absorbed in his thoughts and making the floor of his studio resound with his tread; "I have a disagreeable duty. . . . I have to go out."

Amédée felt that he had selected an inopportune moment for his visit and discreetly took his leave. The grasp of Maurice's hand seemed to him colder and less cordial than was usual.

"What can be the matter with him?" the poet asked himself several times as he was eating his dinner at a small restaurant in the Latin Quarter. When he had dined he betook himself to the *Comédie Française*, partly to kill time and also to inquire how his play was getting on from Jocquelet, who was playing that evening in the *Légataire Universel*.

The actor received him in his dressing-room. He had already drawn on the black knee-breeches and top-boots of his part of Crispin, and was seated at his dressing-table in shirt-sleeves and with bared neck; he had just finished adjusting upon his hairless upper lip the bristling mustache that tradition assigns to the character he was to represent. With-

out rising or saluting he shouted to the poet as he recognized him in the mirror :

“There is nothing new about your piece. The director has not a moment that he can call his own. We are all taken up here with preparations for



bringing out *Camaraderie*, but we shall be through in a couple of days, and then . . .”

Then, talking for the sake of hearing himself talk, to keep that dreadful organ of his in practice, he poured forth, with a noise like that of water

rushing through a broken dyke, a torrent of trivialities. He extolled Scribe's play that they were about to place upon the stage again ; he declared that the famous Guillery, his senior in comic parts, would be detestable in that revival and would make a failure in his part ; he complained that he was persecuted by the attentions of a great lady, "*Baignoire* number six, you know," and with an air of ridiculous conceit displayed a letter that was lying among the jars of paint and pomatum and was horribly redolent of musk ; then, rising to considerations of a higher order, he disparaged the politics of the Tuileries and stigmatized imperial corruption, admitting, however, that "poor Badingue"—who had paid the actor a small compliment three days before at Compiègne—was better than the people who were about him. The poet went home to his bed, deafened by all this empty talk.

When he awoke next morning and thought of Maria, his anxiety had become still more oppressive. When would he see Louise again ? Would her answer be favorable ? Notwithstanding the beautiful autumn morning, his heart was heavy, he felt himself without courage. Never had his routine labors seemed so irksome to him as they did that day. His room-mate, an amateur sportsman who was just back from a two-days' holiday, mercilessly inflicted on him insipid stories of his slaughter among the partridges and the behavior of his dogs, punctuating them with many exclamations of "Pan ! pan !" in imitation of the report of a double-barrelled gun.

When he left his office, however, Amédée had regained somewhat of his usual serenity. He made his way slowly along the quais to the île Saint-Louis, loitering at the book-stalls, enjoying the peaceful calm of the beautiful evening and watching in the golden sky the flight of the swallows as they wheeled about the tall buildings, the lofty spire of the Sainte-Chapelle or the towers of Notre-Dame, making ready for their approaching departure toward the south.

As night closed in, he dined at a restaurant in his neighborhood, and the better to subdue his impatience resolved that he would apply himself to work that evening, putting some additional touches to a scene of his drama with which he was not quite satisfied. He climbed the stairs to his room, lit his lamp and seated himself before his open manuscript. Come! To work! He had been acting absurdly since yesterday. Why should he imagine that there was misfortune in the air? Is there such a thing as presentiments?

Suddenly there was a knocking at the door, three soft knocks, but hurried, abrupt, full of threats of evil.

Amédée arose, took his lamp and went to open the door, and recoiled in astonishment as he beheld Louise standing there in her mourning.

"You . . . here at my room . . . at this hour? . . . What can be the matter?"

She entered the room and sank down upon the poet's easy-chair, who, as he placed the lamp upon

the table, saw that the poor girl was as white as a sheet. She seized both his hands and clasped them with all her strength.

"Amédée," she said in a voice that was not her own, in tones hoarse with despair, "Amédée, I come to you instinctively, as to our only friend, as to a brother, as to the only man, moreover, that may perhaps be able to assist us in repairing the terrible disaster that has befallen us!"

She came to a stop, her utterance choked.

"A disaster!" cried the young man. "What disaster? . . . Maria?"

"Yes, Maria!"

"An accident? . . . Is she ill?"

But Louise shook her head and arms with a wild movement, as if to say: "If that were all!" then, her eyes lustreless and without expression, her mouth distorted in a bitter smile, speaking low and jumbling her words:

"Monsieur Maurice Roger," she said. "Yes, . . . your friend Maurice! . . . Wretch that he is! . . . He has deceived . . . he seduced the poor child. . . . Oh! a scoundrelly thing! . . . And now . . . now . . ." and the blood rushed to her ghastly face, she reddened up to the roots of her hair, "Now . . . Maria is enceinte!"

At these words the poet uttered a loud cry, like that of a wild beast. He reeled and would have fallen had not the table been there. He seated himself on its edge, supported by his two hands, and thus remained, his entire frame frozen by an



LOUISE'S COMMUNICATION TO AMÉDÉE.

icy chill that seemed to pervade every fibre of his being, his mouth bitter with the taste of bile. Before him, sunk deep into her chair for shame, Louise hid her face in her hands, and great tears that were frightful to behold trickled slowly down between the fingers of her poor ragged gloves.

XIV

IT was more than three months since Maurice and Maria had met again.

One summer day when the young man had gone to the Louvre to have another look at his favorite masters, the painters of the gallantries of the eighteenth century, his attention, always on the alert, as a lady's man, was attracted by the magnificent yellow hair of a young lady artist dressed in black in the room where the pastels were exhibited, who was copying a portrait of la Rosalba. It was the hair of the pretty pastel-painter, the celebrated hair of gold and flame, which in those days was disturbing the peace of mind of the entire artistic world of the museum and had converted even the pupils of Signol to be colorists.

Maurice approached the copyist, and they both exclaimed simultaneously :

“ Mademoiselle Maria ! ”

“ Monsieur Maurice ! ”

Was it really so? Was she so quick to recognize him, and with such a charming smile? Come, come! The adorable girl had not forgotten him, then? In his few visits to father Gérard in the old days, faith, he had noticed that he did not seem to be displeasing to her, but after so long a time, to be received in this manner at first sight, with an exclamation that was almost one of joy, the deuce! it was flattering.

Standing by the easel with hat in hand, his trim figure set off by his well-cut clothes, the young exquisite began to talk with Mlle. Gérard. In suitable, well-chosen terms, he at first spoke of her bereavement that was now a thing of ancient date, inquired about her mother and sister and congratulated himself that she had not forgotten him. Then giving rein to his natural audacity :

"Speaking for myself," he added, "I hesitated for a moment before addressing you; you have grown so pretty in the last two years!"

Then as he saw that she was blushing, he went on in an airy manner that seemed to disarm his boldness :

"Amédée told me, indeed, how charming you had grown, but nowadays I scarcely dare ask him for news of you. Since you have been living at Montmartre, he has never offered to take me with him to pay my respects to you, although I know that he goes to see you every Sunday. Upon my word, Miss Maria, I believe that he is in love with you and as jealous as a Turk."



THE ATTENDANT AT THE LOUVRE.

She confusedly protested that it was not so, but still with a smile upon her lips. Unholy thoughts were already beginning to arise in the mind of the sensual young man.

If he had but known the delusive dream that Maria had kept hidden away in a corner of her heart since the time of their first meeting, now so many years ago ! If he had only known her long-concealed desire of being distinguished and loved by that handsome Maurice, when he had flashed like a meteor through their scanty little apartment down there in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, among father Gérard's poor old bric-à-brac ! Why should she not, after all ? Did she not possess that supreme power, beauty ? Her father, her mother, even her sister, wise Louise, had told her continually that she had it. Yes ! from the very beginning she had been fascinated by this young man with the golden mustache and the manners of a duke ; she had hoped that she might find favor in his eyes as well, and in after days, in spite of poverty and bereavement—on account of the poverty, alas !—she had still continued to intoxicate herself with this madness, this narcotic for her pain, and to dream, as in a fairy tale, of the return of Prince Charming. Poor Maria, so good, so innocent, but who had been told too often that she was pretty ! Poor little spoiled child !

As he left you to-day, little Maria, after half an hour of pleasant conversation, Maurice said to you jokingly : “ Be careful not to tell Violette of our

meeting. It would cause me the loss of my dearest friend," and not only did you say nothing to Amédée, but you did not mention it either to your mother or your sister. For Louise and mamma Gérard stand for wisdom, for prudence; they would insist upon your seeing no more of this young hot-head who approached you in a public place and at once told you that you were beautiful and that you had a lover; they would reprove you gently, they would tell you that this young man belongs to a rich and distinguished family, that his mother has great expectations for him, while all that you have is your old worn dress and your handsome eyes, and to-morrow, for greater security, when you went to the Louvre—for father Issachar must have his Marquises with powdered hair, cost what it may, so that the rent may be ready by the approaching quarter-day—to-morrow Mme. Gérard would take up her position beside your easel with her spectacles and her knitting, and throw cold water on the gallant's aspirations.

But you are not frank with Louise and the mother, little Maria; you are keeping a secret from your family. As you make your toilet to-morrow before the little cracked mirror and twist up your heavy hair that is like the sunshine, your heart will beat with anticipation and vanity. At the Louvre, whenever you hear a masculine foot-step resound in the sonorous solitude of the adjacent rooms, your mind will fly from your occupation, and at Maurice's arrival you will be embarrassed, no

doubt, but, as you must admit, not very much surprised and above all, not particularly displeased, Ah! only too well pleased. Little Maria, little Maria, he is whispering to you now: I do not like that; his blond mustache is quite near your cheek, and it is in vain that you cast down your eyes, I can see a gleam of pleasure beneath the long lashes. I do not hear what he is saying to you nor your reply, but how rapidly the tempter does his work, how he worms himself into your confidence! You are compromising yourself, little Maria, you are keeping him too long by your easel.

It is about to strike four o'clock. The keeper in green surtout who was dozing with his three-cornered hat over his eyes in the next room, before Watteau's pictures, has shaken off his torpor, stretches himself, looks at his watch and rises from his bench, shouting: "The rooms are about to close!" Why, little Maria, do you allow Maurice to assist you in getting your things together, to accompany you through the galleries carrying your box of pastels? The tall, dried-up old thing in the *Salon Carré* who wears cork-screw curls as in the time of Louis-Philippe, who is eternally copying the "Virgln with the Green Cushion," has followed you down into the court of the Louvre; look out! She has noticed, the envious old thing, that you had an air of emotion when taking leave of your companion and that you allowed your hand to rest in his for a moment. She has a viperous tongue, has that old maid with the cork-

screw curls. To-morrow you will be the talk of the whole museum, and the gossip will spread to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, even to the *Atelier Signol*, where the two young artists, your respectful admirers, they who were thinking of cutting each



other's throats in your honor, will meet and accost each other with : "Well? The little pastel-painter?—Yes, I know, she has got a lover."

If it were but a lover ! But the pretty pastel-painter has been much lighter, much more foolish

than the two artists and the dried-up old maid think for. It is so sweet to hear one say: "I love you!" It is so sweet to listen to the question: "And you, do you love me a little?" when one is burning to answer: "Yes!" With head bent down and blushing fiery red with confusion beneath Maurice's burning breath, little Maria has finally murmured the fatal yes. Then she saw Maurice turn pale with joy. He said to her: "I must speak to you, it is absolutely necessary that I should speak to you . . . in private, not before all these troublesome people." And when, in her affright, she replied: "But how can that be done? It is impossible," he at once asked her if she did not trust him, if she did not believe that he was an honest man, and the innocent young girl's look conveyed to him an assurance that was stronger than all the oaths in the world.

"Well then," said she, "to-morrow morning at ten clock. In place of coming to the Louvre . . . I will wait for you on the quai d'Orsay, before the landing-place of the Saint-Cloud steamers. . . . Will you be there?"

She was there at the appointed hour; as she reached the place of rendezvous her emotions overpowered her, she was almost ready to faint. He took her arm and conducted her on board the boat, which was throwing out great clouds of black smoke.

"See! We have the boat almost to ourselves. . . . Let me have the pleasure of a little excursion

in the country with you ; the weather is so delightful ! . . . Do not be alarmed ; we will come back in good season."

Oh ! the delicious sail ! Seated at Maurice's side, who whispered words of tenderness to her willing ear and whose look seemed to devour her with its caresses, Maria saw glide past her, as in a dream, aspects of Paris with which she was unfamiliar, the lofty embankments of the quais, the arches of the monumental bridges, then the naked, treeless suburbs, the smoking factories of Grenelle, Bas-Meudon with its boats and its little taverns. At last they came to the park, stretching along the river bank with its depths of verdure.

They wandered there for a long time beneath the cool shade of the chestnut-trees, loaded down with nuts in their green shells. The summer sunshine, filtering through the thick foliage, dotted the alleys with broad, tremulous spots of light, and Maurice kept telling Maria that he loved her, that he had never loved any one but her, that he had loved her the very first time that he saw her in her father's house and that time and absence had been unable to efface her memory ; and the madness of desire that was raging in his libertine blood was so great that he imagined that all that he said was true. No, at that moment he did not think that he was lying. As for poor Maria—oh ! do not be severe toward her ! think of her youth of misery and want, of her life like that of an imprisoned flower !—she was as if stupefied by happiness, she

could not find words in which to frame an answer, and leaning on the young man's arm, she had barely strength to turn upon him from time to time eyes that were swimming with love.

Must the story of her fall be told? Ah! Don Juan, seducer of virgins, how easy is your victory! Is it necessary to show them breakfasting together in a private room of the *Tête Noire*, from which they could see the sparkling river running by? Her emotion, the stifling heat of the afternoon, the champagne, that golden, ice-cold wine that she tastes for the first time, have dazed the imprudent child. Her lovely head falls back upon the cushion of the divan, she is about to faint.

"You are too warm," says Maurice. "This glaring light is making you ill."

He quickly draws the curtain. The room is darkened, and at once he is at the young girl's side, covering her hands, her eyes, her neck, her mouth with kisses.

After the moment that can never be recalled, he doubtless swears to her that she is his wife forever, he only asks her for a little time, a few weeks, that he may gain the consent of his mother, ambitious Mme. Roger, to this unlooked-for marriage. Maria does not doubt him, but sobered by her transgression, a great wave of shame passes over her, and hiding her head on her lover's shoulder, who is lost in the tumbling masses of her dishevelled hair, she summons up by the light of a lightning flash of memory all her past innocence and want, the hum-



MARIA'S DESPAIR.

ble home where honor dwelt, her father dying at his task, and her mother and sister—her two mothers, to speak more correctly—who still call her “little one” and still regard her as a child, a child in all her purity. She feels as if her sin had taken possession of all her being and wishes that she might die then and there.

Be merciful, I beg you, toward weak, erring Maria ! She is so young, and she has so much to suffer !

Maurice—he is not a scoundrel, after all—spoke in good faith when he promised her that he would marry her without delay. He even intended to confess everything to his mother the very next day, but when he saw Mme. Roger she had never appeared to him so imposing with her gray hairs under her widow's cap. He shuddered at the prospect of the inevitable scenes of tears, reproaches and anger, and with the indolence of a voluptuary he said to himself : “ Faith ! I'll wait a little ! ” In the meantime Maria is his mistress, and he loves her after his fashion, better indeed than any of those that he has had up to the present time. He is faithful to her, and when she can steal an hour from her work to come and pay him a surreptitious visit at his studio, his heart beats fiercely and the least delay in her appearance beyond the appointed time disquiets him. She is truly adorable, with her bird-like way of taking alarm and her shrinking manner like that of a sensitive plant touched by the finger, even in her most unguarded moments.

She still wears on her neck a holy medal, like a girl of the people. Is it not delicious? Only Maurice does not like the mournful air that she always has when she is taking leave of him, when she no longer calls him "thou" and asks, in a voice that is a little tremulous: "Have you spoken to your mother?" He kisses her and reassures her: "Never fear; give me a little time to arrange that matter." The truth is that he is beginning to look less favorably upon the idea of that marriage. Yes, he knows that it is his duty. But he is not twenty-three yet. There is no haste. And then is it so much his duty, after all? The little one yielded with very little opposition. She is his mistress now, and not a mistress of caprice, but for good, perhaps for life. Has he not the right to test her, to wait a little while? He is certain that that is what his mother would advise, even supposing her to be very indulgent, very favorable toward the girl. Come! this is the only reasonable course for him to pursue!

Alas! the selfish and the cowardly always have right on their side!

How dearly poor Maria has to pay for her momentary folly; how heavily such a secret weighs upon her young heart! For a few fleeting moments of pleasure with this man of whom she is already doubtful and who sometimes terrifies her, she has to lie to her mother unblushingly, without casting down her eyes, she has to walk the streets of Paris with the voice of remorse constantly pursuing and reproaching her, she has to lower her

veil when she enters Maurice's house and conceal her identity like a thief. But that is not all. After some time of this life of suffering, she is conscious of something strange and mysterious that is taking place within her being. Good God ! She has felt a living being moving within her ! Quick, quick, to Maurice ! She arrives unexpectedly and finds him lazily stretched upon his divan, a cigarette between his lips ; without giving him time to rise, she throws herself into his arms, bursts into tears and makes her terrible confession.

At first he only gives a start of angry astonishment, casts upon her a harsh look.

"*Bah !* you must be mistaken."

"I am sure of it ! I tell you that I am sure !"

She has surprised his cruel look, she feels in advance that her doom is sealed. He gives her a kiss, however, but there is no love in it, and with a great effort, her mouth dry and parched, she stammers :

"Maurice . . . you must . . . you must . . . speak to your mother."

The young man has risen from his sofa with a movement of impatience and begins to stride up and down the room in front of where Maria has seated herself, for she can no longer stand, her strength is failing her.

"My poor Maria," he hesitatingly commences, "I did not dare to tell you. My mother refuses to give her consent to our marriage—for the present, at least."

He lies ! He lies ! She divines that he has not

spoken to his mother. Ah ! wretched girl ! He does not love her ! And she listens in despair, with a noise like the roar of a torrent in her head, to Maurice's soft and honeyed words.



“ Never fear,” he says, “ I will not abandon you, my poor child. If it is really as you say, if it is quite certain, then the best thing to do, don’t you see ? is to leave your family and come and live with

me. In the first place we would leave Paris, you would go to the country for your confinement, and we would put the child out to nurse. *Parbleu*, we would not neglect the little thing ! . . . And then later on, very soon, perhaps, my mother would be reconciled to the situation, would understand the necessity of our marrying. . . . Really, the more I think of it, the more clearly do I see that that is the best course to pursue. Yes, I know that it will be hard for you to leave your folks, but what would you have, my darling ? You can write a nice letter to your mother . . .”

Returning to her side and taking her, listless and heart-broken, in his arms, he tries to show himself more tender toward her. “You are my wife, my dear little wife ; I have said so and I repeat it ; would you not be glad to come and live with me for good and all ?”

So that is all that he can think of, that is the best inspiration that his heart affords him : to take her publicly for his mistress and display her shame to the eyes of all the world.

Maria feels that there is no hope for her. She rises abruptly from her chair, says to Maurice in the voice of one talking in his sleep : “Very well ; we will talk of this some other time,” and then rushes from the room and flies. She returns to Montmartre with the speed of one possessed, finds her mother at her knitting and her sister engaged in setting the table, . . . yes, my God ! just as if there were no such thing as misery and wrong !

. . . takes their hands and falls on her knees before them.

Alas ! poor women !

Already they had been sorely tried. The decline of this unhappy family had been most lamentable, but notwithstanding all, only yesterday they could bear with resignation all that fate could inflict. Yes ! sordid economies, base household tasks, ragged clothing mended many times, all these things they accepted sadly, but without revolt. A lofty sentiment had sustained them and given them courage ; all three of them—the old mother in her linen cap doing the cooking and the washing, the elder sister giving lessons at forty sous each and the little one doing what she could with her pastels—were vaguely conscious that they represented something very humble, but yet sacred and august : a family where there was no stain. They felt that they were living in an atmosphere of esteem and respect. “Those ladies of the rez-de-chaussée,” the neighbors would say, “those exemplary ladies.” Their lowly dwelling-place with its dirty wood-work and its hanging wall-paper, but where they were united in toil, where they pressed more closely to each other’s side the better to feel their mutual love, had for them all the sacred sweetness of a home, and above their ragged mourning, above the ruinous old furniture, above the slender evening meal, above all this misery, in a word, there had hovered and kept watch and ward the pure bright flame of honor. Now, after the confession of the

guilty child, there was an end to all that, it was gone forever. There was a stain upon their life of poverty and duty, upon all their irreproachable past, even upon the memory of the father. Certainly, the mother and elder sister forgave the poor creature, who resting, half-dead, upon an easy-chair, sobbed beneath their kisses as if her heart would break, while she sued for pardon ; still, when they looked upon each other with consternation, their eyes red, their cheeks wet with salty tears, they measured the depth to which the family had fallen, they discerned for the first time how fearful were their abandonment and their distress, and they felt the unendurable sentiment of disgrace taking possession of their hearts, like a sinister and unbidden guest, who, from the very first moment, gives to understand that he has come to be master of the house.

That was the dreadful secret that Louise Gérard in her distraction had poured into the ear of her single friend, Amédée Violette, that same evening, acting as she did from instinct, like a woman crushed beneath a burthen that is too heavy for her, who throws it upon the ground and calls for assistance.

When she had finished her cruel confidence, to which the poet had listened with his face concealed in his hands, and he disclosed his features where his despair had drawn deep furrows, Louise shuddered with terror.

“What suffering I have inflicted on him !” she thought. “How he loves Maria !”



THE CONFESSION.

She saw in the young man's eyes, however, the glitter of a stern resolve.

"It is well, Louise," he growled between his close-set teeth. "It is well. Tell me no more, I pray you. I do not know where to look for Maurice at this hour. . . . But he shall see me to-morrow morning, rest assured, and if the wrong that he has done is not repaired, and that at once . . . !"

His grief and rage caused him a convulsive movement in the throat which prevented him from finishing; and upon a gesture of dismissal that was almost imperious, Louise left him, frightened by the step which she had taken.

And still Maurice Roger was not a bad man at heart. After Maria's abrupt departure, he had felt ashamed and discontented with himself. So she was enceinte! Truly, she had no luck, poor little thing. Certainly, he would take charge of her and her child; he would do what a gentleman ought to do. But his love for her was already beginning to wane. The voluptuary within him, quick to feel desire and disgust, was already weary of this *amourette* in which there was no great pleasure and too great an abundance of tears. On account of her condition, then, he was to marry, turn himself into a good bourgeois, a father of family? He, at his age, with a future of youth and pleasure lying open before him! Truly, it was as stupid an accident as to fall into a hole and break one's leg. And then, who could

tell? So many things are disposed of by chance, if only sufficient time is given. Miscarriages are not infrequent. Perhaps the child might not live. In any case it was quite natural that he should give himself a little time, was it not? that he should wait to see how things would turn out? *Bah!* He was generally lucky, and this tiresome affair, like so many others, would come out all right in the end.

This reckless Maurice, whose conscience, faith! had not kept him awake during the night, was tranquilly preparing his palette next morning and awaiting the arrival of his model, when Amédée Violette entered his studio. At the very first glance he saw that the poet knew all.

"Maurice," said Amédée in a voice that trembled with emotion, "I received a visit from Louise Gérard last evening. She told me everything . . . Everything, do you understand? . . . And I am here to learn whether I have been mistaken in you and if Maurice Roger is an honest man."

Fire flashed from the young painter's eyes, but Amédée's sickly look, his livid complexion and his wasted features, where a night of sleeplessness and tears had set its mark, were pitiable to behold, and then it was Amédée, little Amédée, for whom the painter had a sincere affection, for whom he had retained ever since their college days a sentiment that was the more dear to him that it flattered his vanity, the indulgent and patronizing affection of a superior.

“Oh ! oh ! it is too soon to use big words, to indulge in the melodramatic,” he said, laying his palette upon a table. “Amédée, my dear fellow, I do not recognize you when you speak in that manner, and if you have an explanation to ask of an old friend, that is not the way to set about it. You tell me that Mlle. Louise Gérard has been to you with her confidences. I know how devoted you are to those ladies, I understand your emotion and I consider that you have a right to intervene. You see that I am speaking to you calmly, as to a friend. Do you also lay aside your anger, and notwithstanding your zeal in behalf of the Gérard ladies, do not forget that I have been the best and dearest of your friends of boyhood and youth. I am aware that I am standing at a very critical period of my life. Let us discuss it, give me your advice upon it ; it is your right and your duty to do so, but not in that angry and threatening tone, which I forgive you, but which wounds me, and which, were such a thing possible, would make me doubt your feeling toward me.”

“You know very well that I love you,” unhappy Amédée replied, “but what need have you of advice ? You have the frankness to deny nothing. You admit that it is true ; that you have seduced a young girl. Has not your conscience already told you what remains for you to do ?”

“Marry her ? Of course, and I mean to do so. But you do not think of my mother, Amédée. This marriage will break her heart ; it will be the



AMÉDÉE AND MAURICE.

death-blow to all her ambitions, all her hopes. Oh! I expect to gain her consent, only I must have the time to turn about in. . . . In a little while . . . very soon, perhaps . . . I do not say that I will not . . . If the child lives . . .”

At these words, drawn from Maurice by the cynicism that lies at the bottom of all selfish natures, all Amédée's anger returned to him.

“Your mother?” he exclaimed, “your mother is the widow of a French officer who died facing the enemy. I am very sure that she knows what the requirements of honor and duty are. Go and find her, tell her that you have seduced a poor girl who is enceinte through your means. Your mother will not advise you to marry her; she will order you to!”

The argument was strong and to the point; it made an impression upon Maurice. He was beginning to be irritated, however, by his friend's violence.

“I tell you again, Amédée, that you go badly about your work,” he replied, raising his voice. “It is not for you to prejudge my mother's opinion, and I am not here to receive orders from any one. After all, there is nothing that authorizes you to give them to me, and it is not because you have been Maria's lover that I . . .”

He was interrupted by a cry of fury. Amédée, with wild eyes and doubled fists, took two steps toward Maurice, and addressing him face to face, in heart-rending tones :

“Well, yes!” said he. “I loved her, and I would have made her my wife, and you, who have already ceased to love her, you, who took her through caprice, for your amusement, as you take them all, you have destroyed all my dreams of future happiness! She has taken you in preference to me, and understand, Maurice, I am too proud to complain of it, too just to bear you enmity on account of it. Upon my honor, I am only here to keep you from doing a base action. If you reject my advice, our friendship will be ended for all time, and I do not care to reflect upon what will take place between us, but it will be something terrible. . . . Alas! I am wrong! I should not speak to you as I do. Listen to the dictates of your heart, which I know to be generous and good. You have abused an innocent child, reduced a poor and worthy family to despair. You have it in your power to repair the evil you have done, you can, you will do it! I beseech you, do it, for the sake of your own self-respect, for respect for the name that you bear! Act like a gentleman and a brave man! Give to this young girl, whose only wrong was that she loved you, give to the mother of your unborn child your name, your heart and your love. I am sure that she will make you happy, and I shall not be jealous of your happiness, only too glad to have my friend, my loyal Maurice, restored to me once more, and to love him still and admire him as in the old days.”

Deeply affected by these warm words, already

weary of the discussion and the struggle, the painter, averting his head, had surrendered one of his hands to his friend, who pressed it in his own. He suddenly turned and looked at Amédée, beheld his eyes bright with tears, and partly through tenderness, but more through feebleness of will and moral inertness, he uttered these words :

“You are right, after all. . . . Let us settle this matter at once. . . . What do you want me to do ?”

“My good, dear Maurice ! Quick, dress yourself, let us hasten to those ladies ; go and kiss the poor child and comfort her. Ah ! I knew that you would understand me and that your heart is in the right place ! . . . How happy those ladies will be ! Come, old friend, is it not a pleasant thing to do one’s duty ?”

Well, yes ! Maurice thought that it was pleasant, for the moment. Influenced and excited by his friend, he hastened toward the good action that was pointed out to him as toward a party of pleasure, and while changing his jacket to go out :

“In fact,” said he with animation, “my mother cannot but approve of what I am about to do, and then she gives way to me in everything. I am sure that she will come to love my little Maria in time. . . . Never mind, there is no resisting you, Violette, and you are a most sweet and persuasive Violette. . . . Come ! I am ready. . . . A handkerchief, my hat. . . . Let us go.”

They left the house, and in the cab that con-



RAIN AND GLOOM.

veyed them to Montmartre, inconstant Maurice, reconciled now to his new future, formed a hundred plans, laid out for himself a scheme of life. When married he would apply himself to work in earnest. First of all, immediately after the ceremony, he would leave with his wife to spend the winter in the south, where she would be confined. He knew of a pretty spot near Antibes, on the Cornice road, where, moreover, his time would not be lost and from which he would bring back many a nice study of landscape and marine. It would not be until the ensuing winter, however, that he would make definite arrangements for their future life. His neighbor, the painter Laugeol, had just moved out ; he could hire his rooms : " A splendid studio, my dear fellow, and six windows opening on the Luxembourg." Already in imagination he beheld himself quartered there, working industriously, successful at the Salon, carrying off a medal ; he even went so far as to decide how their bed-room should be furnished. " And then how convenient the garden will be for the baby and the nurse on fine days ! "

In the midst of this idle chatter, however, he suddenly noticed the look of pain on Amédée's face as he sat silent in his corner of the carriage.

" Forgive me, my dear friend," he said, affectionately seizing his hand, " I had forgotten what you told me just now. Ah ! what an absurd thing is destiny ! To think that my happiness should give you pain ! "

The poet looked at his friend long and sadly, and said :

"Be happy with Maria and make her happy ; that is all that my friendship for you both asks for."

They had reached the foot of Montmartre hill, and the cab was beginning to slowly climb the ascending street.

"My friend," Amédée resumed, "we shall soon be at our destination. You will make your call upon the ladies alone, will you not ? Oh ! do not be alarmed ; I know Louise and the mother ; you will not hear the first word of reproach from them, and your manly conduct will be appreciated as it deserves to be. . . . But you will permit me to leave you ! . . . You see it would be too painful for me."

"Yes, I understand, my poor friend. Do as you will. . . . But come ! every wound heals, every storm subsides," replied Maurice, who was prone to impute to every one his own lightness of character. "Come ! cheer up ! I shall never forget the service that you have done me, for it makes me blush now to think of it . . . Yes, I was on the point of committing a dirty action. Come, Amédée, let us embrace !"

They clasped each other in their arms and the cab came to a stop. Amédée remarked the look of disgust on his friend's countenance when once he was on the sidewalk in front of the Gérard's residence, a gloomy and common-looking lodging-place for poor people, the cracked plaster front of which

reminded one of the wrinkles on a poor man's face. To the right and left of the entrance-way two shops, a pork-seller's and a fruiterer's, exhaled their nauseous odors. Amédée, however, was very short with this last repugnance of delicate Maurice's :

"You see the little garden at the end of the alley-way ; it is there," said he. "*Au revoir.*"

After a last clasp of the hands they parted. The poet saw Maurice plunge into the dark alley-way, cross the narrow court, open the trellised garden door and disappear behind a clump of withered verdure. How many times had Amédée followed that same road, his heart gently beating at the prospect of seeing his little Maria ! And it was to take her from him that Maurice was now entering that house for the first time in his life. And he, himself, Amédée, had willed that it should be so ! He had of his own accord given his loved one to another ; he had supplicated his rival, he had compelled him, so to speak, to rob him of his most precious hopes ! How bitter was the thought !

Amédée gave the driver his address and got into the cab again. A cold autumnal rain had begun to fall, obliging him to pull up the glasses. Uncomfortably jolted about in the dirty vehicle as the poor nag dragged it at a trot through the streets of Paris, the young poet shivered as he looked out at the dripping carriages and dragged pedestrians beneath their umbrellas as they passed. An oppressive melancholy seemed to be falling from the lead-colored sky, and Amédée, stupefied by his grief, was

conscious of a strange void sensation within him, as if his heart had been removed.

Upon his return to his chamber in the île Saint-Louis, it sickened him to look upon his furniture, his few engravings, his books scattered in disorder upon their shelves, his work-table covered with papers. The studious evenings by his lamp, the long hours of thought dedicated to his difficult task, the year of austere and joyless youth that he had lived until now, had all been devoted to Maria. All that unremitting labor, all those unyielding efforts had been for her sake, that he might one day call her his own. And now, at that very moment, the giddy and guilty child was no doubt weeping for joy in Maurice's arms, who to-morrow would be her husband !

Seated before his table, his head buried in his hands, Amédée gave free course to his sad thoughts. His life appeared to him such a wasted one, his destiny so gloomy, his future so dark and threatening, he felt himself so forsaken, so solitary, that the desire of life momentarily forsook him. It seemed to him that an invisible hand was compassionately touching him upon the shoulder, and he at the same time desired and feared to turn his head, for he well knew that that hand was the hand of death. He did not picture it to himself as the hideous skeleton of the Dance of Death, but as a calm figure draped in black, solemn, and yet very gentle, who would lovingly draw him to her gentle breast with a mother's tenderness and put him to

sleep, him and his grief, in a profound, eternal, dreamless slumber. He quickly turned his head and gave utterance to a frightful cry. For a single instant he had seemed to see the corpse of his wretched father, the suicide, he who had died for love, stretched on the floor at his feet, clutching a bloody razor in his clenched hand, and with the gaping red wound seaming his neck and his gray hairs dabbling in a pool of blood. He had not ceased trembling at the horrible hallucination when there came a knocking at his door. It was the *concierge*, bringing him two letters.

The first was stamped with the famous device : "*Comédie Française, 1680.*" In extremely gracious terms, the director-general informed Amédée that he had read with the greatest pleasure his versified drama entitled *l'Atelier* and that he was in hopes that the reading committee would receive the work favorably.

"Too late !" said the young man as he opened the second envelope.

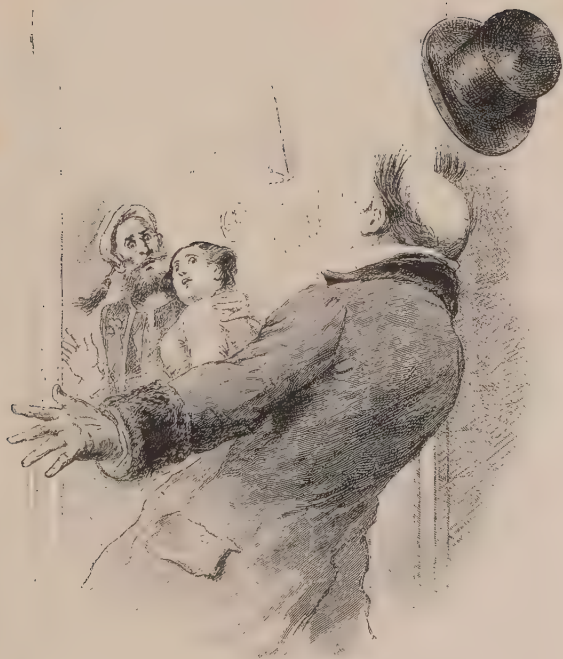
This other letter bore the address of a notary of Paris, and notified M. Amédée Violette that M. Isidore Gaufre, director of the *Crédit des Paroisses*, having died intestate, he, as nephew of the deceased, would be entitled to a distributive share in the estate, the value of which it was as yet impossible to estimate with accuracy, but which could not yield him less than two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand francs.

Success and fortune ! Everything at once rain-

ing down on him from Heaven ! At first Amédée's brain reeled, he was dazed with surprise, but in presence of these unlooked for favors of fortune, which were powerless to repair the ills that he had suffered, the noble-hearted poet was profoundly sensible that neither riches nor even glory are of equal value with a deep affection or a noble dream, and quite unstrung by the irony of his fate, he burst out in a peal of harsh laughter.

XV

THE late M. Violette had not been far out of the way formerly in his supposition that M. Gaufre was capable of disinheriting his family in favor of his servant-mistress. Berenice had been wanting in patience, however ; the turban and forked beard of an irresistible sergeant-major in the Zouaves of the Guard had brought ruin to the handsome girl's hopes. One Sunday when M. Gaufre, according to his inviolable custom, was singing vespers at Saint-Sulpice, he perceived that for the first time in his life he had left his snuff-box at home. Now the holy offices were only endurable to this sanctimonious person when frequently diversified by a good pinch of snuff, so instead of awaiting the final benediction and then going for his customary walk along the quais, he left his stall, returned unexpectedly to the rue Servandoni and surprised Berenice in tender conversation with the soldier.



M. GAUFRE SEES SOMETHING.

The *bondieusard* was pitiless in his anger. He drove the Norman ignominiously from the house, tore up the will that he had made in her favor and died a few weeks afterward from an indigestion, the result of eating mussels *à la marinère*, leaving all his property to his natural heirs in spite of himself.

Amédée, whose play had been accepted by the actors of the Français but was not to be put on the stage until the following spring, and to whom the notary entrusted with the charge of settling up M. Gaufre's affairs had made a payment of a few thousand francs on account; Amédée, whose melancholy still remained with him and who did not feel that he had sufficient courage to be present at the marriage of Maurice and Maria, thought that he would at all events get a little enjoyment from his newly acquired fortune and the independence which it conferred on him. He accordingly threw up his place and took his departure for Italy, in hopes to assuage his sadness.

Never travel with a heart-ache! Never go to sleep with a beloved name echoing in your mind, to enjoy that semi-consciousness, so feverish and full of nightmares, of a night's slumber in a sleeping-car! Amédée experienced all that suffering. Among the continual clash and clatter of the wheels pounding the iron rails, he seemed to hear the sound of lamenting, despairing voices, always shrieking in long-drawn, wailing notes the name of the lost loved one. At times the tumultuous

uproar would quiet down a bit ; the brakes, the springs, the wheels, all the mad mechanism of iron and steel would seem to tire of shrieking and howling, would muffle its rhythmic gallop, and then the traveller could distinguish among the diminishing racket a strain of music, confused at first, like a sound of distant groaning, then gradually growing clearer, but always the same, persistent, cruelly monotonous, and it was the fragment of a song that Maria had been used to sing when they were both children. Then suddenly a mournful whistle would sound and go wailing through the night, the train would plunge madly into a tunnel, the noise of the frightful concert would redouble and resound angrily beneath the echoing arch-way, and amid all this metallic clangor Amédée could now distinguish a distinct, regular sound, like hammers in a cyclopean forge beating upon their anvils, and each one of their terrible blows seemed to fall upon his heart and crush it.

Do not travel, and above all, do not travel alone, if you are afflicted with a sorrow ! How inhospitable, how hostile is the sensation that one experiences on arriving in a strange city under such circumstances ! Amédée had to undergo for the first time all the inconveniences of foreign travel : the tedious waiting for his luggage in dreary stations, the annoyances of custom-house officers, the hurried crowding into an omnibus of the worn-out travellers, who eye each other with looks of suspicion and ill-humor, the reception on the

hotel steps by the inevitable Swiss porter in laced cap, murdering all the jargons of Europe, upon whom the new-comers make a dead-set and who gets inextricably tangled up in his "Yes sirs," his "Ja wohls" and his "Si Signors." Amédée, an inexperienced tourist, who did not go about dragging a dozen trunks after him and had not the insolent airs of wealth, was instinctively banished by the polyglot Swiss to a bed-room on the fourth floor, opening on the air-shaft and so gloomy in appearance that his first thought as he washed his hands was one of fear lest he might be taken ill in such a hole and die there before assistance could reach him. For his greater tranquillity of mind, a notice written in four languages and suspended from the wall warned him to deposit all his valuables in the office of the hotel, exactly as if he were in a forest infested by brigands, and the severe scroll intimated in addition that he himself was to be regarded as a probable pick-pocket and that his bill would be presented and payment expected every five days.

The wearisome life of the railroad and the table d'hôte was just commencing for him. He was about to be carted about from city to city like a sack of flour or a cask of wine, he was about to put up at pretentious and monumental inns, where he would have his number like a convict, to meet, from one dining-room to another, the same family of carnivorous English, with whom he might have made the tour of the world without so much as exchanging a bow, to

be regaled every day on tasteless soup, stale fish, leathery meat and insipid Bordeaux, which have, so to speak, a character of internationality ; and above all, his was to be the horror, as he came in every night to go to bed, to pass through those disheartening, uniform, gas-lit corridors where the gloom of a phalanstery seems to descend upon one's de-



voted head, and where, before the closed doors, pairs of cosmopolitan shoes—heavy-nailed shoes of the Alpine climber, vile German boots, my lord and my lady's conjugal laced shoes, reminding one by their dimensions of the days of the troglodyte giants—await with a weary air the advent of the matutinal boot-black.

In Italy Amédée had condemned himself by his

imprudence to endure all the weariness, the deception and the nostalgia of the lone tourist. In presence of the famous monuments and the renowned localities which for centuries past have served to afford inspiration to painters and relaters of traveller's tales, and which have degenerated, in a certain degree, to the condition of ancient models and food for literary development, Amédée felt that sensation of familiarity, that incapacity for wonder, which paralyze the faculty of admiration. Shall we venture to say it? The great dome of Milan, that stupendous quiver of white marble arrows, had no power to move him, the sublime bronze gates of the baptistery at Florence left him cold and unimpressed and the leaning tower at Pisa appeared to him simply as a gigantic puzzle. He walked miles and miles in the silent galleries of the museums, saturating himself with art, surfeiting himself with *chefs-d'œuvre*, and he was disgusted to find that he could not endure consecutively twelve Adorations of the Shepherds and fourteen Descents from the Cross, even though signed by the most illustrious names. Scenes of martyrdom and suffering, which were so numerous, were particularly odious in his eyes, and he conceived a special aversion, even exceeding that which he felt for the ubiquitous Saint-Sebastian pierced with javelins, for a certain monk, always depicted on his knees in prayer with a hatchet buried in his tonsure. His blunted and depraved senses could discern only the unpleasant features, the disagreeable side of a work

of art. In the charming artlessness of the early masters he could see only the childish barbarousness of the drawing, and he found that their use of yellows imparted a tone of monotony to the most famous colorists.

He wished to do something, cost what it might, to arouse his sensations, to see something extraordinary. He hastened to Venice; to the city



where there is no noise, no birds, no verdure, to the silent country of water, sky and marble, but there, again, he found the reality far below his dreams. Saint Mark's and the palace of the Doges did not afford him the wonder, the shock of enthusiasm that he was longing for. Of all these wonders, also, it was his misfortune to have read too many descriptions, seen too many more or less faithful pictures. In his disenchantment, he called

to mind a lamp-shade in his parents' house which had at one time greatly excited his boyish imagination, a cheap common shade of blue pasteboard, bearing a print of a nocturnal fête at Venice with rows of pin-holes pricked in it to represent the illumination of the ducal palace.

Again, never travel, and above all never go to Venice, alone and unloved. For a young married couple on their honeymoon or for a pair of lovers playing truant, the gondola is a floating boudoir, a nest upon the waters, like the halcyon's, but for the melancholy man who reclines upon the black cushions of the sombre bark, the gondola is a coffin.

Late in January Amédée suddenly returned to Paris. He would not be obliged to see Maurice and Maria immediately, who had been married for a month and were to remain in the south until the close of winter, and besides, the rehearsals of his piece required his presence. The notary whom he had entrusted with his interests paid over to him twelve thousand francs of his income in crisp bank-notes, which would enable him to lead a life of ease, to work without haste and without catering to the caprices of the multitude, to be free to indulge his taste for his art for its own sake. The young poet fitted up for himself an elegant bachelor abode in a fine old mansion on the quai d'Orsay and went to work to hunt up some of his old friends, Paul Sillery, among others, who was beginning to assume a distinguished position in

the field of journalism. He made his appearance in society now and then, and quietly began to renew his interest in life.

The first visit that he paid was to Maurice's mother. He was much pleased to find that Mme. Roger, though disappointed, doubtless, was indulgent toward Maria and resigned to her son's marriage, satisfied that he had acted like a man of honor. After that he went to Montmartre to embrace Louise and mother Gérard, who received him with great demonstrations of affection. They were not as poor as they had been. Maurice, always generous where money was concerned, had come to the assistance of his wife's family ; Louise was now giving lessons that were suitably recompensed, and Mme. Gérard was able to decline, with grateful tears, the offer of the poet, who would have opened his purse to her as if he had been a son. He dined with his good friends as of old, and they had the tact not to speak too frequently of the young married people, but there was a vacant place at table. The memory of the absent one came back to him, and he returned to his abode that evening haunted by bitter recollections.

The rehearsals of his piece, which began presently at the *Comédie Française*, the long detentions at the theatre, the changes and finishing touches that he had to supply from day to day afforded Amédée a beneficial distraction from his griefs. The *Atelier*, however, first represented in the early days of April, met with a respectful, but cool reception

at the hands of the public. The popular tone of the piece, its direct, simple expressions of feeling, the calico dress of the leading lady and the noble father's blue apron, the rugged lines, in which the slang of the faubourgs was introduced here and there; above all a factory in full blast with its operatives running to and fro, the whirl of its machinery and even the roar of escaping steam, all displeased and shocked the fashionable world. It was too abrupt a change from their accustomed luxurious drawing-rooms and titled characters, from aristocratic adultery and words of love poured in the ear of the expensively costumed coquette by the young actor leaning on the piano with the graces of a stage dandy. Jocquelet, moreover, in his portraiture of the old working-man, was too emphatic and over-acted his part, and a homely young *débutante* of slender abilities made an ignominious failure. The criticisms, generally of a routine character, had little in them to please the author; the least severe damned Amédée's attempt by qualifying it as an effort that did him honor. He got some hard raps, and a former Long-Hair of the *café de Seville* who had not succeeded as a novelist—he was no other than the ghastly scribbler who had formerly selected for a theme the violation of a grave—crushed the author of *l'Atelier* in an ultra-classical article in which he inveighed against realism and called upon all the busts and all the marble wigs of the foyer to bear witness to his indignation.

Strange as it may appear, Amédée was not greatly disconcerted by his reverse. He did not possess the qualities necessary for theatrical success? Very well then, he would try something else; that was all there was about it. It was not so very hard, after all, to give up an art which is more exacting than any other and still not the highest and which does not permit the poet to exercise his own unrestricted fancy. Amédée resumed the making of verses for himself alone, for his own satisfaction; the delight of rhythm and imagery, the gathering with a painful pleasure of the flowers of melancholy that his love trouble had planted in his soul.

The summer was at hand, however. Maurice returned to Paris with his wife, who had been happily delivered while at Nice of a little boy, and Amédée had to go and see them, although he knew beforehand that the visit would give him pain.

The amateur artist, handsomer than ever, and attired in his customary red jacket, was alone in his new studio, which he had filled to repletion with luxurious and interesting knick-knacks. The thoughtless young man received his friend as if nothing had happened between them, and after their first embrace and the usual questions about scattered friends and the occurrences that had happened since their last parting, cigarettes were lighted.

"Well, what are you doing?" the poet inquired. "You had a magnificent scheme of work traced out. Have you been applying yourself to your task? Have you a lot of sketches to show me?"

"No, faith ! Scarcely a thing. I allowed myself to vegetate down yonder, you see, I played the lizard basking in the sun. It is a terrible thing to take up one's time, happiness is. I was just stupidly happy." And placing his hand upon that of his friend, who was seated beside him, he added in a momentary revery : " A happiness for which I am indebted wholly to you, my good Amédée."

Maurice uttered the words lightly, however, as if in payment of a debt due to his conscience. Did he remember, had he even ever suspected, that the poet had been very wretched on account of that happiness of his, that he might be so even now ?

There was a ring at the door-bell.

"Ah !" the master of the house joyfully exclaimed. " It is Maria, who has been taking her baby for a walk in the Luxembourg. That young citizen will be six weeks old next Monday, and you will see what a handsome little man he is already."

Amédée's heart rose in his throat. He was about to see her again, the wife of his friend and a mother, quite changed, no doubt.

She appeared in the door-way, raising the portière with one hand, and over her shoulder a glimpse was caught of the cap and rustic face of the nurse. She was not changed, no ! there was no change at all ; only the happy contentment of love, the joy of a first motherhood and the absence of care from her daily existence had imparted an increased bloom to her beauty, that was adorned by a fresh and charming toilette. She blushed at first as she



THE LITTLE CITIZEN.

recognized Amédée, and he sadly reflected that his presence could awaken only painful recollections in the young woman's heart.

"Why don't you kiss each other, you are old acquaintances?" said the painter, laughing, with the assured air of a man who knows that he is loved, in that tone of a land-owner giving his permission to shoot a rabbit in his warren that married men are so fond of assuming.

Amédée contented himself with implanting a kiss upon her glove, and the look which Maria gave him to thank him for his reserve caused him an additional pang. She was grateful to him, however, she smiled kindly on him.

"My mother and my sister," she graciously said, "often have the pleasure of receiving a visit from you, Monsieur Amédée—just as in the old days, you remember. Now that Maurice and I are at home again, I hope that you will not neglect us."

"Maurice and I!" Her voice was very soft and her eyes turned tenderly toward her husband as she uttered those simple words. "Maurice and I!" Ah! the two were one, now! How she loved him! How she loved him!

Then Amédée had to admire the little one, whom his father's noisy joy had awakened in the nurse's arms. The small being opened its blue eyes from among its laces, eyes that were as serious as those of an old man, and feebly clasped in its little paw, as soft as the skin of a chicken, the finger that the poet extended to it.

"What have you named him?" he asked, at a loss for something to say.

"Maurice, after his father," quickly replied Maria, infusing into her words a whole explosion of love.

Amédée could stand it no longer. He invented some sort of a pretext for withdrawing, promised that he would return soon, and fled.

"I will not go there very often!" he said to himself upon the stairs, irritated that he had to choke down a sob.

He did return, however, and always to suffer fresh pains. It was he who had brought about this marriage. He should have been glad that Maurice was steadier, had even grown a little dull under the influence of his paternity and his conjugal well-being, and that there was no indication of his reverting to his former state and becoming a hard case again. On the contrary, however, the spectacle of their home, Maria's air of contentment, the allusions that she sometimes made to her gratitude toward Amédée, and particularly Maurice's pacha-like ways in his family, his manner of speaking to his wife, like an indulgent master to a slave that is but too glad to yield obedience; all these things inspired in Amédée a feeling of displeasure and disgust. He always came away from the Roger's house angry with himself, irritated that such evil feelings should find a harboring place in his heart, ashamed that he loved the wife of another, the wife of his old friend. Feeling the

necessity of preserving at every cost Maurice's friendship, he yet could never look him in the face without a feeling of secret ill-will and concealed envy.

He made his visits to the young household more infrequent, however, he endeavored to introduce new interests into his existence. Now a man of leisure, . . . for his small fortune allowed him to select his own time for working, to await the visits of his inspiration, . . . he made his appearance again in society, and in all societies, was seen in the most diverse places, fashionable drawing-rooms, the *coulisses*, Bohemia. He loitered a great deal and wasted much time, interested in all women, constantly duped by his tender imagination, always expending an excessive sensibility upon a fancy of the moment, mistaking his desires for love, and he had several mistresses.

The first was a handsome lady, something of a pedant, whom he had met in the Countess Fontaine's salon. She was supplied with a husband of ripe years, who, having pocketed his flag, turned his coat, belied his promises and been false to his oaths only two or three times, would not suffer his name to be pronounced in any public assembly unless preceded by the epithet *honorable*. A man thus seriously occupied in saving the Capitol, that is to say, in courageously siding with the strongest and upholding the majority in all its iniquities, thereby increasing the number of his places, sinecures, gratuities, shares of stock and advantages of every

description, must necessarily neglect his wife ; it troubled him very little, moreover, that she foisted upon him as frequently as possible the rôle of Sganarelle, to which he seemed predestined. The lady—of the doll-like order of beauty, not very young, not having got beyond Georges Sand in literature, making three toilettes daily, with an enormous bill at the dentist's—looked favorably upon the young poet on account of his romantic face, and in his company made a rapid trip over the entire itinerary of the land of Tenderness. Thanks to modern progress, the journey is made nowadays by express train. After passing the small stations—"Blushes behind the fan," "Hand-squeezing," "Appointment at the Museum," etc., and making a stop at the more important station of "Scruples" (ten minutes for refreshments here), Amédée reached the terminus of the line and was the happiest of mortals. How exquisite are the hours of a liaison in polite society ! He became Madame's spaniel, an essential article among the furniture of her drawing-room, figured at all the dinners, balls and routs that she honored with her presence, repressed as well as he could his yawns in her box at the opera and was entrusted with the confidential mission of supplying her with caramels and chocolate-creams from the foyer. His recompense consisted in metaphysical conversations in which the lady and he would split hairs upon some question of sentiment. * * * * After a few months of this equivocal felicity the rupture came without

an attendant pang, and Amédée was not even conscious of a regret as he restored the tokens that he had received, to wit : a framed photograph from Leuchars', a bundle of letters cribbed from the fashionable novels of the day and written in a long English hand on very stylish paper, to say nothing of a white glove, which, in its resting place among the other souvenirs in Amédée's casket had turned yellow, like the good-looking madame herself.

A great red-headed girl with the form of a goddess, who received three hundred francs a month for displaying her dresses on the stage of the Vaudeville and paid a louis a day to her hair-dresser afforded Amédée a new experience, more costly but also much more amusing than the first. No splitting of hairs, no psychological subtilities about this handsome person, but then she had the majestic pose of a cardinal's mistress walking through the streets of Constance in robes of stiff brocade to witness the burning of John Huss, and her voluptuous smile disclosed a row of teeth that seemed made for no other purpose than to devour the patrimony of young men. Unfortunately Miss Rose of June (that was the young lady's theatrical name) had her charming head stuffed full with the ridiculous vanity of a second-rate actress. Her fits of rage when displeased by a criticism in the newspapers, her hysterics and torrents of tears when she was only assigned a part of fifteen lines in the new piece, were beginning to tell on Amédée's patience when he learned that general rumor as-

signed to him as a preferred rival Graboux, the actor of the *Variétés*, the monstrous buffoon whose gorilla-like ugliness has seemed for twenty years so delicious to the most refined public in the world. Relieved of quite a large number of bank-notes, Amédée discreetly retired.

To this succeeded a common-place, but rather tender romance with a pretty little lass whose acquaintance he made in a crowd that was looking at the revolving horses one evening when there was a popular fête. Louison was twenty years old, earned her living by working for a well-known florist and was as fresh and rosy as an almond-tree in April. She had had but two lovers as yet, first the shop-boy—you will always have to take the leavings of these people, you elegant rakes!—then a drummer for a fancy-goods house who had inspired her with a rather plebeian taste for rowing. Amédée got his first kiss from the grisette as they were navigating the Marne, sitting by Louison's side in a boat moored to the willows of the îles d'Amour, between two verses of a boating-song, and the poet, true child of Paris that he was, was charmed by the pretty creature, gay as a lark, who never came to see him without bringing him a little bouquet. On these occasions he recalled Béranger's delightful lines: "I am of the people, and so are my amours!" His heart was touched, he felt that he was loved. He had already turned her silly little head; Louison began to be silent and dreamy; she asked him for a lock of his hair which she always carried

around with her in her porte-monnaie, she went to a fortune-teller and paid a hundred sous to have her fortune told with the cards, the "*grand jeu*," to know if the brown-haired young man, the knave of clubs, would be faithful to her, and Amédée for some time allowed his image to be enshrined within this simple heart. Finally, however, as might have been expected from the delicacy of his perception, he became conscious of his mistress' want of refinement and suffered from it. She was really too much of a chatter-box with her thick drawling utterance of the faubourgs, she transposed her t's and s's, punctuated her conversation continually with "to be sures" and "listen nows," addressed Amédée as "my little man." She would eat dishes that people of her class are fond of ; one day, as she kissed her lover, her breath smelled of garlic. Nevertheless, he maintained their relations for several seasons, touched by the poor girl's sincerity and disinterestedness and glad to give his money to one who expected and asked for nothing. She left him of her own accord, through feminine pride, feeling that he had ceased to love her, and the separation was almost a cause of regret to him.

So his life dragged its slow course along. He worked a little, wasted much time in idle revery, threw away his youth in a fruitless quest of love.

He went as little as possible to Maurice Roger's, who was really turning out to be a good husband, domesticated at his own fireside, delighting to romp with his little boy ; but every time that Amédée



WAR.

saw Maria, it brought him several days of downheartedness, of undefined melancholy, of impossibility to apply himself to work.

"Come!" he would murmur, throwing aside his pen as the young woman's image rose between him and his page, "come! I am incurable; I love her still."

In the summer of 1870, Amédée, weary of Paris, was meditating another trip, he was upon the point, wretched man! of revisiting the Swiss porters who speak more languages than Pico de la Mirandola and the melancholy pairs of shoes in the hotel corridors, when the war broke out. The poet's acquaintance with the revolutionary Beards of the *café de Seville* and the parliamentary cravats of the Countess Fontaine's *salon* had disgusted him forever with politics, and so he had given but little thought to the liberal ministers, the *plébiscite* and the different phases of the malady to which the Second Empire succumbed. But Amédée was a good Frenchman. The violation of the frontier, the defeats sustained in the early battles of the war brought the blood rushing to his face as if he had sustained a blow. When Paris was threatened, he took up arms like the rest, and although he was not of a military turn, he swore to himself that he would do his duty, his whole duty. That fine, bright September day when he saw Trochu's gold-laced *képi* pass in front of the lines of bayonets, there were four hundred thousand Parisians, full of ardor like himself, who devoted themselves to death as gayly

as they stuck a flower in the barrel of their musket. Ah! the misery of defeat! All that those brave men were to do for five months was to tramp through the snow and mud and eat carrion. Alas! alas! poor old France! After so much glory! Poor France, country of Jeanne d'Arc and Napoleon!

XVI

THE siege had lasted nearly three months. There had been a battle on the banks of the Marne on the thirtieth of November, then, for twenty-four hours, the firing had slackened and there had been a heavy fall of snow. It was said, however, that the second of December would bring decisive results.

On that morning the battalion of National Guards to which Amédée belonged had left the city for the first time, with orders to hold itself in reserve in the third line under the guns of a fort in a hideous plain to the east of Paris.

The National Guards did not present such a bad appearance after all. A little clumsy in their great hooded capotes of heavy black cloth with bright tin buttons, armed with the heavy old-fashioned musket and encumbered with canteen, cartridge-box and haversack—their whole equipment having an improvised aspect of which the newness was too



AMÉDÉE'S REGIMENT.

apparent—they had come from the centre of the city at the double-quick in columns of fours, with a great beating of their drums and commanded by their mounted *chef-de-bataillon*, a truss-maker, who had once been quarter-master's sergeant in the third hussars. Certainly, they would do the best that they were capable of. It was not their fault, after all, if no one had confidence in them, if they had not been sent to the front; and once outside the fortifications, as they crossed the draw-bridge, they had set to thundering out the *Marseillaise* as if they would split their throats. What detracted somewhat from their warlike appearance, perhaps, was their strong hunting-shoes, their serviceable leather gaiters, their woollen gloves and comforters, their air of comfort, in a word, the air of men who have brought some little delicacies with them, a bit of bread with something palatable inside it, cakes of chocolate, tobacco, a flask that the good wife has carefully filled with old rum.

They had not proceeded two kilomètres beyond the ramparts and were approaching the fort, the guns of which were silent for the time being, when a staff-officer, mounted on an old yellow nag that was only skin and bones, who was awaiting them, motioned them to stop and curtly directed their commandant to take position to the left of the road, in a field from which the last beet had long since been gathered. They stacked arms, therefore, broke ranks, and remained there, awaiting further orders.

What a forbidding place ! The naked, desolate fields, covered in spots with half-melted snow, lay beneath dirty, low-hanging clouds, and the low, squat fort seemed to have gathered itself together in an attitude of defence. Here and there were groups of houses in ruins, and a factory, of which the shells had half destroyed the tall chimney and battered down the wall, on which was still legible, in great black letters, the inscription : " High-Life Soap-works ;" and running through the midst of this cheerless landscape was the long muddy road, the road that led to the battle-field down yonder, in the middle of which, like a symbol of the death that was near them, lay the carcass of a horse that had dropped there in his tracks.

Facing the National Guards, on the opposite side of the road, a battalion of the line that had been in the affair of the day but one before was making soup. It had fallen back to that point for a little rest, having been out all the preceding night in the falling snow, without shelter. Ragged, dirty, worn-out with fatigue, the poor regulars were a sorrowful sight to look at as they bent sadly over their sorry little fires of green wood that could hardly be made to burn. Beneath their shapeless képis they all showed pale, hollow faces and beards grown in the hospital. Their lean forms, bending beneath their weariness, shivered in the cold, piercing air that swept the plain, and their shoulder-blades protruded under the faded cloth of their capotes. Some of them, wounded, but not severely

enough to be sent to the hospital, wore bloody bandages about the head or wrist. When an officer passed, with head down and dejected air, they did not salute. These men had suffered too much. Their sullen looks evinced a furious, reckless feeling of desperation, ready to burst into flame at the slightest provocation and vomit forth abuse. They would have inspired horror had they not been such objects of pity. Alas! they were the vanquished!

The Parisians were hungry for news of the recent military operations, for, as was always the case during that frightful siege, they had read in the morning papers only incomprehensible despatches, bulletins filled with terms of strategy that were so much Greek to the uninitiated; but they all, or nearly all, had preserved intact their hopeful patriotism, or to speak more candidly, their blind chauvinism, and were certain, in face of all reason, that victory would ultimately remain with them. They crossed the road in little groups and approached the red-legs to have a little chat.

“Well, it was pretty hot down there Champigny way on the thirtieth? Did we really get possession of the Marne? You know what the talk is in Paris, my boys? That Trochu has fresh information, that he is going to break through the Prussian lines and join forces with the army of relief; in a word, that we are near the end of the struggle.”

Thereupon the honest National Guards, warmly clothed and bundled up against the wintry weather,

began to splutter out meaningless words to these ghosts of soldiers, these wretches exhausted with hunger and fatigue, high-sounding phrases with which they had been gargling their throats for months past : "break the circle of iron," "not an inch, not a stone," "war to the bitter end," "a sortie like a torrent," etc., etc. The finest talkers, however, were soon discouraged by the brutal way the regulars had of shrugging their shoulders and giving their interlocutor a look that was like that of a bad-tempered dog when he is disturbed.

A magnificent sergeant-major of the National Guards, however, in brand new equipments, a great light-complexioned, blond-bearded fellow, husband of a fashionable milliner, who was in the habit every evening at his beer-saloon, after his sixth bock, of elucidating with matches an infallible plan for raising the siege of Paris and reducing the German army to powder, was so ill-advised as to keep on.

"Come ! my brave fellow," said he, addressing a little corporal who was just on the point of dipping his spoon into the *pot-au-feu*, even as he might have interrogated an old tactician, a manœuverer of Turenne's or Davoust's forces, "come, you were present at that affair day before yesterday, tell us what you think. Are Ducrot's positions as strong as they are claimed to be ? Shall we gain a battle to-day ?"

The corporal turned his head brusquely, displaying as he did so a face of the color of saffron in

which gleamed two blue eyes that were full of anger and defiance as he cried in a hoarse voice.

“Go and see for yourselves, you feather-bed soldiers !”

The National Guards retired, saddened and disgusted by the demoralization of the troops.

“That is the army that the empire has bequeathed to us !” said the milliner’s husband.

On the road coming from Paris and hurrying forward in the direction of the guns that were beginning to thunder in the distance, a battalion of Mobiles came up at the route-step. They were poor lads from the departments of the west, young, all of them, wearing on their képis the ermines of Brittany, and the sufferings and privations of the siege had not as yet entirely effaced the fresh colors of their peasant complexions. Less used up than the regulars, whose term of duty, it must be said, came too often, not suffering much from cold beneath their sheep-skin jackets, still retaining their respect for their officers, whom they knew personally —“our gentlemen,” as they called them—sure of a bit of absolution, in case anything happened them, from one of their priests, who marched as file-closers in rear of the first company with gowns tucked up and shovel-hats well down over their eyes, the lads of the moors went forward to the front as did their forefathers in the days of Stofflet and M. de Rochejacquelein, in rather straggling order, it is true, but with a firm step, the chassepot at the proper angle on the shoulder, and by Saint

Anne ! they looked like soldiers who meant business.

As they passed in front of the National Guards the big blond waved his képi madly in the air and shouted in stentorian tones :

“ Vive la République ! ”

Again, however, the enthusiasm of the chauvinist was thrown away ; the Bretons were marching to danger, a little from temperament, but more from a spirit of duty and discipline, and at the very beginning these simple-minded fellows had attained to the highest wisdom, which consists in loving one's country and dying for it when necessary without worrying one's self about the various mystifications called governments. Five or six at most of the *moblots*, astonished at the cry by which they were saluted, turned their placid peasant faces upon the National Guards, and the battalion passed on.

The milliner's husband—he had no occupation, was idolized by his wife, spent at the café all the pocket-money that she allowed him and from time to time seduced an apprentice—was greatly scandalized.

While these events were passing, Amédée walked to and fro in front of the stacked muskets, deep in reverie. His martial ardor of earlier days had receded. From the commencement of this horrible siege, he had seen and heard too many foolish things done and said, had witnessed too much of one of the most pitiable spectacles that a nation can

afford, vanity in misfortune. It made him sick at heart to see his compatriots, his beloved Parisians, redoubling their bluster after each defeat and mistaking their levity for heroism. If he admired the patient resignation of the women as they stood in line in the muddy street at the door of the shops where horse-flesh was distributed, he was every day more deeply irritated by the boastfulness of his companions on the ramparts, who considered themselves sublime in playing at soldiers. The official bulletins, the rubbish of the daily journals, inspired in him an immense feeling of disgust, for never had they lied so shamelessly or flattered the populace with such ignoble servility. It was with a heart without hope, with a clear prevision of the approaching disaster that Amédée at evening sought to gain for himself a little slumber by the fatigue of walking about the streets of Paris, dimly lighted in those days by infrequent petroleum lamps, under the black, opaque wintry sky, beneath which the echoes of the distant cannonade growled and grumbled incessantly like the barking of monstrous dogs.

How terribly lonely those evenings were! The poet had not a friend or a companion with whom he could share his patriotic sorrows. Paul Sillery was serving in the army of the Loire. Albert Papillon, who had manifested a great deal of noisy enthusiasm on the fourth of September, had secured the appointment of prefect of one of the departments of the Pyrenees, and having furbished up his classics, the ex-laureate was down there, out of



"OLD POT-BELLY."

reach of danger, expending much saliva and many figures of rhetoric, and expectorating from convenient balconies harangues in which there was rather too frequent allusion to three hundred soldiers of antiquity and a certain pass among the mountains of Greece, not entirely unknown to history.

Amédée sometimes went to see Jocquelet at his theatre, where performances were being given for the benefit of the hospitals or to assist the casting of a cannon. The actor, in military blouse and booted up to his middle, declaimed, with huge success, poetry adapted to the occasion, in which enthusiasm and big words took the place of art and common-sense. But what could one say to the triumphant player, who looked upon himself as a new Tyrtæus and who, upon a second recall, was convinced that he had saved his country and that Bismarck and old William had better look out for themselves.

As for Maurice Roger, he had sent his mother and his wife and son to the country at the beginning of the campaign and was now at the advanced-posts with his father's old friend, Colonel Lantz, wearing on his jacket the double gold-braid of a lieutenant of Mobiles. For in the dearth of officers that existed at that time, they had gone and fished the old colonel up from the depths of the engineer's offices at the ministry of war and had torn him away from his rulers and compasses. Poor man ! His recollections of active service dated back to the Crimea and the Mamelon-Vert ; since

those days he had not seen the sun shining upon a sapper's pick, and here they were calling upon him, the honest old veteran, to return to the trenches and sand his despatches with earth thrown up by the enemy's shells, as Junot did at Toulon in the battery *des Hommes Sans Peur*.

Well, he did not say "Ouf!" old Lantz did not. After giving his three portionless daughters a kiss upon the forehead, he took from its drawer his uniform that the moths had half devoured, neatly shook from it the camphor and pepper that had been placed there to preserve it and with his little short bureaucratic step went to superintend his workmen, as far as possible from the fortifications, quite near the Prussian lines. The people of the auxiliary engineers, the gentlemen in American caps, did not have a very long time in which to poke fun at his old cloak of antiquated cut and his tall képi which seemed to date back to the days of father Bugeand. One day when a German shell had burst among this improvised staff and every one had fallen flat upon the ground, Colonel Lantz alone had not faltered, and after the explosion he had calmly settled his spectacles upon his nose and wiped the earth from his beard as coolly as he used to rinse the india-ink from his brushes. *Bigre!* he wanted to show you, *Messieurs les pékins*, how to sustain the honor of any branch of the service, and to teach you proper respect for the black velvet facings and the double red stripe down the side of the trousers. Notwithstanding his air of inattention

and deafness, the colonel had heard the words : "father Lantz," and "old pot-belly," furtively whispered by the youngsters. Very well, Messieurs pasteboard officers, you know now what the old army was made of !

Maurice Roger, detailed from his battalion to assist Colonel Lantz, did his duty like the soldier's son that he was, following his chief into the most exposed positions, and neither did *he* duck his head or bend his back-bone at the screaming of the shells. There was warrior's blood in his veins, and the voluptuary was not afraid of death. The open-air life that he led, however, the absence of his wife, the abnormal condition of excitement that is produced by war and that eager thirst for pleasure that is common to almost all those who hold their lives in their hands, all these things contributed to arouse in him his old libertine and spendthrift proclivities. When his duties permitted him to go to Paris and spend twenty-four hours there, he profited by the occasion to have a champagne dinner at Brébant's or Voisin's in company with some pretty woman, and to regale himself with the luxuries of those days, such as kidney-beans, gruyère cheese, and the exceedingly great treat of a leg of mutton from a sheep that had been surreptitiously raised in some servant's apartment on the fifth floor.

One night when Amédée had lingered late upon the boulevard, he saw Maurice in full uniform come out of an all-night restaurant, having upon his arm



MAURICE AND THE ACTRESS.

a pretty actress of the Variétés, greatly extolled by the theatrical paragraphists for her zeal as hospital nurse, but who, according to present appearances, did not spend much of her time at the bedside of the wounded. This encounter caused the poet an additional pang. This, then, was the husband for whom Maria, hidden away in some dull country-place, was certainly torturing herself with fears at this very moment ; it was for this incorrigible rake that she had thrown over the friend of her childhood and rejected his tenderest, most delicate and most faithful love.

To kill time and escape from his loneliness, Amédée had returned to the *café de Seville*, but he found there only a small group of his old acquaintances. There were no literary men, or but very few at most. The Long-Hairs, now cropped according to regulation, were wearing képis of various kinds, and the poets were mostly scattered and carrying the knapsack and cartridge-box. Some of the political Beards, however, had not given up their old customs. The war and the fall of the empire had been a victory for them, and the fourth of September had dispersed them among public employments of every description. At least twenty of these Beards had been provided with prefectures and all, or nearly all, had become public functionaries. There was one on the committee of National Defence, and three or four others, selected from among the most blood-thirsty, were members of the committee on barricades, for improbable as the fact may appear at the

present day, such a committee did exist and perform the duties for which it was created—a committee duly organized according to law, with a regular office of its own, great china inkstands, letter-paper with special heading and minutes duly read and approved at the opening of every session—and sitting around its green table, the professors of émeute, the doctors of insurrection of the *café de Seville* generously placed at the service of the country the experience which they had acquired with the dominoes at the “Seville.”

But the Beards who remained in Paris and held more or less important places in the government were not capable of unintermitting toil, notwithstanding their burning zeal, and as the offices where they devoted their labors to the salvation of their country generally closed at four o'clock, the Beards then enjoyed their well-earned repose and went to take their nip at the “Seville,” as in old times. There it was that Amédée found them and again mingled in their conversation, which was devoted exclusively to martial and patriotic subjects. These Beards, not one of whom was capable of giving the command: “By the right flank” to a platoon of infantry, had all received—through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, no doubt—the genius of strategy. Every evening, from five until seven, there was a decisive battle in progress on every one of the marble-topped tables. Supported by the artillery of the carafe of iced-water, which stood for Mount Valerian, a glass of Turin Vermouth, that is

to say Vinoy's corps, made a feint of attacking a saucer that stood for the batteries of Montretout, while the regular army and the National Guards, symbolized by an absinthe and a glass of bitters, made a sortie in mass from the southern side of the city and marched straight upon the key of the enemy's position at Versailles, where the match-safe stood.

There were also men of ideas among the Beards, inventors, of very terrible resources, who all had an infallible method for annihilating the Prussian armies at a blow, and who accused General Trochu of treason because he rejected their offers, alleging for a reason the antediluvian prejudices of the law of nations. One of these visionaries, formerly physician in attendance upon a somnambulist, took from his pocket, together with his tobacco-pouch and his cigarette paper, a lot of little phials labelled cholera, plague, typhus, yellow fever, black-vomit etc., and offered, as a very simple matter, to go and disseminate these epidemics among all the German camps by means of a navigable balloon, the principle of which he had discovered the night before just as he was getting into bed.

Quickly wearying of all these gas-bags and lunatics, Amédée went no more to the *café de Seville*. He lived the solitary life of the Parisian in those times of siege, always yielding more and more to his discouragement, and on no day, perhaps, had he felt that feeling weighing more oppressively upon his heart than on this morning of the second

of December, the last day of the battle of Champagne, as he walked sadly to and fro before the stacked muskets of his battalion.

So this was the progress achieved by the human race, so many hundreds, thousands perhaps, of centuries old ! Hatred, senseless wars, fratricidal murder, these were its triumphs ! Progress ? Civilization ? Empty words ! Never a moment's respite for the enjoyment of peace, love, fraternity ; never a moment's halt in the march of blood and crime ! The innate brutality of man still always appearing on the surface, the right of the most powerful still bearing to the earth with its wild-beast's claws the white-robed form of Justice ! Of what avail, then, had been so many religions and philosophies, the noble dreams and the sublime flights of human thought toward the good, the true, the ideal ? It was true, then, the horrible doctrine maintained by the pessimists ; we were like the beasts of the field, condemned to an unceasing doom of mutual slaughter in order to sustain life ? If such was man's existence, all that remained was to abandon it in disgust, to vomit up one's soul.

The noise of the cannonade was increasing, and its surly roar was now accompanied by the thin, sharp rattle of musketry. Beyond a wooded hill which shut in the view to the south-east, a very dense, white smoke, spreading over the entire horizon, was continuously ascending into the gray sky. The fight had commenced again down there, and it must be pretty hot, for soon the ambulances—

ammunition wagons drawn by mounted artillerymen and omnibuses that had been requisitioned - commenced to pass. They were filled with wounded men, whose plaintive groans were plainly audible as they were driven by. The least severely wounded had been packed into the omnibuses, which proceeded at a walk, but the road had been cut up by the prevailing storms and it was distressing to behold those mutilated forms tossed to and fro, grievously jolted at every rut. In the long and narrow wagons of the military hospital service, however, the appearance of the dying men stretched upon their bloody mattresses was still more heart-rending.

The frightful train of mangled flesh was slowly pursuing its way in the direction of the city and the hospitals. At a hundred paces from the position occupied by the National Guards, however, the vehicles sometimes stopped before a house where a provisional hospital had been set up and deposited there such of the wounded as were least capable of enduring transportation. The unwholesome but powerful attraction that spectacles of horror always have for mankind impelled Amédée Violette's steps in that direction. The house, spared by the bombardment and protected against the plunderer and the incendiary by the flag of Geneva, was a perfect type of the little country place, the dream to which every shop-keeper gives tangible shape as soon as he has made his fortune. Nothing was wanting there, neither the plaster lions at the entrance, nor

the little garden with its globes of silvered glass, nor the basin set in rock-work for the gold-fish to swim in. In the warm days of the preceding summer, by-passers must often have caught a glimpse of honest bourgeois in their shirt-sleeves and women in white dresses, sociably eating a melon in the shade of the leafy arbor. The imagination of the poet, quick to conceive scenes like this in the humble life of the suburbs, was evoking this picture of a Parisian Sunday, when a young surgeon suddenly appeared at a window of the first floor, his képi pushed back upon his head, wiping his hands on his blood-stained apron. He thrust his head quickly out, and addressing a hospital-steward, whom Amédée had not noticed at first and who was cutting up linen on a table in the garden :

"Well, Vidal, you confounded dawdler," he impatiently exclaimed, "how about those bandages? Do we get them to-day or to-morrow?"

"Make way, if you please," said at the same instant a gentle voice close beside Amédée, who moved aside to afford passage to two litters that were being brought in by four Ignorantin brothers.

The poet recoiled with a cry of fright and surprise, for in the two unconscious wounded men whom the brothers were bringing in he had recognized Maurice Roger and Colonel Lantz.

Hit, yes, both of them, mortally ! It happened less than an hour ago.

Things were looking black for us down there on the banks of the Marne. It had been a great mis-

take to remain inactive one whole day and give the enemy time to concentrate his strength. When it was decided to renew the attack, our troops struck up against densely massed forces and formidable batteries. Two generals killed ! So many brave fellows slaughtered ! And here we were retreating again and losing more ground.

With head down and shoulders bowed, sinking down in his saddle from discouragement more than from fatigue, one of the commanding generals, his field-glass in his hand, was observing from a distance our breaking lines.

"If we could only entrench down there," he growled, pointing to a bit of rising ground that commanded the river ; "if we could throw up a redoubt ? . . . It could be done in a night with a hundred picks. I do not think that the enemy's fire reaches that position, and it is a strong one."

"We can go and see, general," some one replied, very gently.

It was father Lantz, "old pot-belly," who was there, dismounted, and at his side were Maurice and three or four others of the auxiliary engineers ; and faith ! notwithstanding the five gold braids on his antiquated képi, which carried one back to the days of Horace Vernet's "Smala," the poor man with his spectacles on nose, his long cloak and his piebald beard had nothing more imposing about his appearance than a park policeman, one of those veterans who shake their canes at little boys to keep them from walking on the grass.



THE FIELD HOSPITAL.

"When I say that the German artillery cannot carry as far as that," the general said, "I am not sure. Still, colonel, you are right; it is best to see. . . . Send two of these gentlemen."

"With your permission, general," father Lantz replied, "I will go myself."

Whereupon Maurice Roger, with an impulse of bravery that sat well upon him, immediately interjected :

"You will not go without me, will you, colonel?"

"As you please, colonel," said the general, who had already directed his glass upon another point of the field of battle.

So, the old veteran, the water-colorist of the engineer department, accompanied by the only son of his brother-in-arms of Africa and the Crimea, had marched forward into the fire as unconcerned as if he was going to the ministry with his umbrella under his arm. Just as the two officers reached the plateau, however, a projectile from the Prussian batteries fell into a caisson and exploded it with a fearful crash. The ground was strewn with dead and wounded. Father Lantz saw the infantry flying in every direction, the artillery-men hurriedly limbering up their pieces.

"What!" he exclaimed, drawing himself up to his full height, "they are abandoning the position!"

The colonel's face became transfigured. Opening wide his old cloak and displaying his black velvet facings, on which glittered his cross of commander of the Legion of Honor, he drew his sword and

placed his képi upon the point of it, and bareheaded, his gray hair flying in the wind, his arms extended, he threw himself in front of the fugitives.

"Halt!" he commanded in a voice of thunder. "Right about, you wretches. right about! . . . Here is the post of honor. . . . Fall in, boys! Gunners, to your pieces! . . . *Vive la France!*"

It was at that moment that another shell had burst directly in front of Maurice and the colonel and they had both fallen.

Amédée, tottering with emotion and with a heart overflowing with grief and alarm, had followed the two litters into the hospital.

"Put them in the dining-room," an attendant had said to the Ignorantins. "There is no one there yet. The doctor will come to them at once."

The young man in the blood-stained apron cast a look upon the two wounded men as he hurriedly entered the room, and with an expression of pity and a slight shrug of his shoulders, said between his teeth:

"There is nothing to be done . . . ; and it will not be long to wait for."

In truth, the colonel was already in the death agony. They had thrown over him a woollen covering, and his life-blood, saturating the stuff, made great stains upon it that perceptibly spread and grew larger from moment to moment. Still, however, the wounded man seemed to be recovering consciousness. His eye-lids parted slightly, his

lips quivered. The surgeon, who had reached the door, returned to the litter where the old officer was lying and bent over him.

"You have something that you wish to say to me?" he asked.

Old Lantz, without moving his head, turned upon the surgeon a mournful look, oh! how mournful! And in a voice that was barely audible, the voice of a phantom, he murmured:

"Three daughters . . . to be married . . . three . . . portionless . . . Three . . . three!"

He gave a deep sigh. His blue eyes became dim, rose a little beneath the upper lid, then became fixed and glassy. Colonel Lantz was dead.

Do not despair, old fighting France! You will always have true-hearted soldiers like this to fight beneath your banners, devoted to you to the point of every sacrifice, ready to serve you for a crust and to die for you, bequeathing to you in all trustfulness their widows and their orphans. Despair not, old France of the hundred years' war and of 'Ninety-two!

The brothers, wearing on the arm their distinguishing badge, a red cross on a white band that contrasted with their black gown, had kneeled about the corpse and were praying in a low voice. It was only at that moment that the young surgeon noticed Amedee motionless in a corner of the room.

"What are you doing here?" he sharply said.

"I am the friend of this poor officer," Amédée replied, pointing to Maurice where he lay unconscious.

"Very well, stay with him. If he is thirsty, there is the ptisan for him, there upon the stove. . . . You, gentlemen," added the surgeon, addressing the Ignorantins, who were rising from their knees with a last sign of the cross, "you are going back there, I suppose?"

They silently bowed their heads, the oldest of the brothers closed the dead man's eyes and the doctor left the room with them, saying in a tone of ill-humor :

"Try to bring me back some whose case is not so hopeless."

For Maurice Roger, too, was dying. His shirt was all red beneath his unbuttoned blouse and a thin stream of blood was trickling from his forehead down into his blond mustache ; but he was handsome still beneath his marble-like pallor. Amédée carefully took one of his arms that was hanging down and replaced it upon the litter, retaining his friend's hand in his own. At the contact, Maurice made a feeble movement and finally opened his eyes.

"Ah ! how thirsty I am !" he groaned.

The poet went to the stove and got the vessel containing the ptisan, and bent over the suffering man to give him to drink. Then Maurice's vague look changed to an expression of surprise; he had recognized Amédée.

"Is it you, Amédée? Where am I, then?"

He made a fruitless effort to rise, his head turned a little to the right, and close beside him he beheld the corpse of his old commander, his eye-lids closed and the peace of the unending sleep already resting upon his features.

"My colonel!" he said: "Ah! I understand . . . I remember. . . . How they ran! . . . *Bougres de lâches!* . . . But you, Amédée? . . . Why are you here?" And replying to the tears that his friend was unable to restrain: "So, it is all up with me, is it?" he murmured.

"No! no!" warmly exclaimed Amédée. "They will attend to you right away. . . . The doctor will be back. . . . Cheer up, my dear Maurice! Have courage!"

But suddenly a great shudder ran through the frame of the wounded man, his teeth chattered and he again said, with a frightful quivering of the lips:

"I am thirsty! . . . The drink, my friend! . . . Give me a drink."

He was a little calmer after taking a few swallows of the ptisan, and closed his eyes, as if in repose or meditation, but opened them again after a minute, fixed them on his friend and said to him in a faint voice:

"You know . . . my wife, Maria . . . Marry her . . . I entrust them to you . . . her and my son."

Then, exhausted, doubtless, by the effort of ut-

tering these words, he sank down in an apparently lifeless condition upon the litter, the canvas of which was now quite saturated by the blood which he had lost. A moment later his breath began to come short and quick. Amédée, kneeling at Maurice's side, was weeping upon his hand, and in the intervals between the convulsions of the dying man, he could hear down there where the battle was raging the ceaseless roar of the guns, still pursuing their work of slaughter.

XVII

THE leaves are falling !

It is a calm, beautiful afternoon in the month of October. Not a cloud is to be seen in the light blue of the limpid sky, where the sun, which since the morning has been pouring down floods of pure and harmonious light, is now beginning to sink majestically toward the horizon, like a good king who grows old at the end of a long and prosperous reign. How buoyant is the air ! How calm and bracing ! It is certainly the finest day of the splendid autumnal season. Down there in the valley the river, sparkling in the sunlight, rolls onward like a torrent of molten silver, and the woods that crown the hills are dyed with hues of golden yellow and blazing copper. The distant panorama of Paris, beautiful and grand to gaze upon, with its world-famed structures and the dome of the Invalides blazing like some huge specimen of the goldsmith's art, shuts in the view. As a fond and



MARIA AND LITTLE MAURICE.

coquettish woman, desirous that a regretful remembrance shall linger in the mind of her departing lover, casts upon him her most enticing smile, the declining season has adorned itself, for one of its last days, in all its soft splendor.

But the leaves are falling.

In the garden of the country-place at Meudon that he has been occupying for the last eight years, Amédée Violette, who married Maurice's widow shortly after the war and is now in his thirties, is walking up and down upon the terrace beneath the lindens that have been partially stripped of their leaves, gazing upon the charming autumnal landscape.

He is famous. He has worked hard and his reputation as a poet is founded upon the sincerity of feeling manifested in his books. Doubtless the object of bitter jealousies at one time, and even yet occasionally treated with injustice, but esteemed for the worthiness of a life that is entirely filled with his attachment to his art, he holds an enviable position in literature. His means, though moderate, suffice to raise him above trivial cares. Living as he does remote from the world, in the contracted intimacy of the few friends who have his love, he knows nothing of the petty cares of ambition and vanity. Amédée Violette should be happy.

His old friend Paul Sillery, who has been out to Meudon to breakfast with him this morning, Paul Sillery, doomed to daily toil, to the harassing and enervating life of the journalistic profession, heaved

a deep sigh once he was seated in the railroad car that was to take him back to Paris, to his compulsory labors, to the article that must be made ready in time for the morrow's issue in the midst of the chaffing and uproar of the editorial rooms as he sits by his table, upon the edge of which lies the cigar that he has been forced to abandon unfinished.

Ah! that Amédée does not stand in need of much pity! He has a competency, a family, a happy home. *He* is not obliged to fritter away his talent upon unproductive trifles; he has leisure, he can stop when he is not in the vein for working, has time for reflection before he puts pen to paper; he can do good work. *Parbleu!* it is not surprising that he should produce artistic work, books full of truth and sympathy, in the atmosphere of love by which he is surrounded. In the first place it is very evident that he idolizes his wife, and he has accustomed himself to look upon Maurice as his own son, the pretty little ten-year-old, so elegant and so manly with his long curls, just like a prince of the blood. It is clear that Mme. Violette is possessed by a sorrow that will never leave her; there is something dead and broken within her heart, but how kind and grateful is the look with which she regards her husband! And then, can there be a more touching spectacle than Louise Gérard, that excellent old maid, the directing spirit of the household, whose care it is to envelope them all in an atmosphere of

elegant comfort and orderliness, while at the same time bestowing her devoted attentions upon mamma Gérard, the paralytic grand-mother? Of a truth, Amédée has ordered his life well. He loves and is loved ; he has established, for his mind and for his heart, connections that are dear to him and that will never fail him ! Ah ! he is a happy man, and he is wise.

While Paul Sillery, ensconced in his corner of the car, thus allows his reflections to carry him along almost to the point of envying his friend, Amédée, spell-bound by the charm of the day that is drawing to its end, is walking with slow steps to and fro and lingering beneath the lindens of his terrace.

All around him the leaves are falling.

A gentle breeze has sprung up. The blue of the sky grows paler. Down below there in the nearest faubourg of Paris the windows are beginning to flame beneath the oblique rays of the setting sun. It will soon be night, and upon the carpet of dead leaves that crackle under the poet's footsteps other leaves are falling. They are falling, one by one, slowly, but unceasingly. Last night's frost has scorched them with its breath. Dry and rusty, they cling but feebly to the parent tree, and however gentle the passing breath of air, it plucks them, one by one. Parting from the bough that has been their home, whirling for an instant in the golden light, and at last, with a little sad, rustling sound, joining the company of their sisters that lie with-



"THE LEAVES ARE FALLING."

ered and blasted upon the sand of the garden-walk, the leaves are falling, the leaves are falling !

Amédée's heart is sad within him.

He should be happy. What reproach has he to make to destiny ? Has he not to wife the woman that he wished for, that he has longed for all his life long ? Is she not the sweetest, the best of companions to him ? Yes ! but he well knows that she only gave her consent to marrying him in obedience to Maurice's last request ; he well knows that Maria's heart is buried in the grave of the soldier who laid down his life at Champigny.

Her heart is a secret chapel of tender regret to which Amédée is not, and never will be, admitted, and where the memory of her adored dead, like a lamp in the sanctuary, is kept constantly alight ; the memory of the man to whom she gave herself unreservedly when she was a loving maiden, the man who was father of her only child, the hero who tore himself from her arms to give his heart's blood to his country. Amédée may well feel sure of the devotion, the gratitude of his wife ; never will he have her love ; Maurice stands there, a posthumous rival, between her and him. Ah ! that Maurice ! His love for poor Maria was very shallow and very badly shown ! She should remember that he first basely seduced her and then intended to abandon her, and that had it not been for Amédée she would have never been his wife. And if she had known that in the time of the siege, when she was far away, he was deceiving

her with other women ! . . . But she will never know anything of that. Amédée has too much delicacy to violate the memory of the dead, and he even respects and admires in Maria her fidelity to her sentiment and her illusion. He suffers from it, however. She to whom he has given his name, his heart, his life, is incapable of receiving consolation ; he must be resigned. Though married again, she is still a widow at heart, and it is all in vain that she wears light dresses ; her smile and her eyes are still in mourning.

Her Maurice ! How is it possible that she should forget him when he lives at her side in his son, in this beautiful child of love, who is named Maurice too and whose bright and pretty face bears such a striking resemblance to his father's ? Amédée has a presentiment that in a few years the boy will be another Maurice, with the same seductive ways and the same vices. The poet does not forget that his dying friend entrusted the fatherless child to his care ; he endeavors to be kind and just toward him and to bring him up in the right way. He sometimes experiences a bitter feeling of tenderness as he recognizes in the child the instincts and the characteristics of the man whom he loved so well and who did him such grievous wrong, but in spite of everything, he cannot feel a father's love for the child of another, he whose union has been unblessed with children.

And they envy him, they envy poor Amédée ! The little joy that he has is mingled with much

grief and sadness, and he does not dare to confide his sorrows to good Louise, who yet divines them, to Louise, whose sentiment for him in days gone by, so courageously repressed, he now suspects, and who is the good fairy of his fire-side. If he had only understood her in those times ! There, perhaps, was happiness for him, true happiness !

The leaves are falling, the leaves are falling !

After breakfast, while strolling and smoking cigarettes among the dahlia beds, where the great golden spiders of autumn have spun their webs, Amédée and Paul Sillery, on the morning of the latter's visit, talked of the past and the comrades of their youth.

It is not a very cheerful conversation, for since those days there have been the war, the commune, the end of the world. How many have died ! how many have disappeared ! And then this retrospective review proves how liable we are to be mistaken in estimating people, and that after all chance rules.

"Un-tel," who was formerly looked upon as a great master of prose, the founder of a school, and whose maxims of art five or six young men, faithful disciples, used to disseminate by copying his waistcoats and imitating his affected tricks of speech, "Un-tel" is reduced to writing for the newspapers tales that are elaborated with the minute detail of obscene Japanese ivories. "Chose," the furious revolutionist, has obtained a good fat place for himself, and modest "Machin," a lay-figure, always

in the back-ground, who scarcely received any notice at their symposia, has actually published two exquisite books, master-pieces.

All the Long-Hairs and all the Beards, too, have pursued unexpected courses, but the politicians are particularly note-worthy by the variety of their destinies. Among those who were wont to attend at the *café de Seville* at absinthe time may now be reckoned eight deputies, three ministers, two ambassadors, a receiver-general, and thirty convicts who are awaiting at Nouméa the long deferred amnesty. Everything considered, the most interesting of the party is that old fanatic Dubief, who never drank anything but sugar and water, for he met his death on a heap of paving-stones at the hands of a platoon of Versailles infantry.

A person whose memory is not fragrant in the nostrils of the two friends, forsooth, is that turn-coat Arthur Papillon. Universal suffrage, with its usual intelligence, has not failed to elect that fool and word-monger, and at the present day, as a fish swims in water, he is stirring up the mud of the political sewer. Enriched while still a young man by the handsome portion that his wife brought him, he has successively been deputy, clerk to a commission, secretary, vice-president and president of a group, under-secretary of state; in a word, he has filled every attainable position. He is just now thundering against clericalism, and his wife, rich, ugly and pious, has sent their little daughter to the school of the *Oiseaux*. He has

not as yet succeeded in securing for himself a ministerial port-folio, but never fear, he will get there. He is extremely vain, full of self-confidence and not more honest than the law allows ; he imposes on himself. Unless between this and then it is decided to establish a system of rotation by which all the deputies shall be minister in turn, or unless the port-folios are drawn by lot—which would not be such a very bad thing, after all—Arthur Papillon is the necessary, the inevitable, the fated man in three or four combinations. That will be terrible, for his eloquence will descend in torrents and he will be one of the most indefatigable microbes in the hell-broth of parliamentary instruction.

And Jocquelet ? Ah ! it only needed to mention his name to afford the two friends a good laugh, for the illustrious actor is now the glory and the laughing-stock of the universe. It is a long time ago since Jocquelet snapped the fetters that bound him to the Parisian stage. Like the tricolored flag he has several times made the tour of Europe ; like the banner of old England, he has sailed upon every sea. He is the great Mime-Errant, and the capitals of the old world and the two Americas wait, palpitating with desire, for him to deign to shed upon them the beneficent manna of his monologue. At Chicago, where they took the locomotive from his train, he formed the intention, after this mark of respect that was not, however, disproportioned to his merit, of taking out naturalization papers as

an American citizen, but a new tour in old Europe was proposed to him, and through a feeling of filial gratitude—great souls are subject to such weaknesses—he consented to return to us once more. As was inevitable, he gathered in gold and laurels by the cart-load. Reaching Stockholm by sea, however, he was painfully surprised not to be saluted by the guns of the squadron, an honor which was once extended to a celebrated cantatrice. Let diplomats beware! There is a coolness between Jocquelet and the court of Sweden.

THE END.

